THE

WILLOW WEAVER

AND SEVEN OTHER TALES

MICHAEL WOOD

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THE WILLOW WEAVER

AND SEVEN OTHER TALES

A LIST OF THE STORIES OF MICHAEL WOOD

THE HOUSE OF PEACE

THE DOUBLE ROAD (*shortly*)

Published by LONGMANS, GREEN & Co.

THE SAINT AND THE OUTLAW

1. THE SAINT AND THE OUTLAW
2. THE PRINCE AND THE WATER GATES
3. LOX
4. THE DREAM GARDEN
5. THE WAY OF THE HERB GATHERER
6. THE LAND OF MARVELLOUS NIGHT
7. THE FOOL AND THE FOLK OF PEACE
8. THE SINNER'S REQUIEM
9. THE PREACHER
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11. THE TUMULTUOUS SHADOWS
12. THE GUARDIAN OF THE CITY
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THE WILLOW WEAVER

AND SEVEN OTHER TALES

BY

MICHAEL WOOD

LONDON AND TORONTO
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
MCMXV

PREFACE

"Dost thou feel the soil of thy soul stirred by tender thoughts? Disturb it not with speech but let it work in quietness and secrecy."

THESE few stories of Michael Wood are here reprinted with the consent but not at the suggestion of the author. To those who understand, the appeal is diverse but unmistakable; the delicate description of our Mother Earth, the sense of the invisible, the value of the things that count, the scorn of a good deal that is conventional, ordinary, and admitted, are here writ plain for those, who, in the French phrase, have the seeing ear and the hearing eye. At a time when much that is ingrained in us is thrown into a crucible of fire, and elemental doubts and certainties have taken its place, such attempts to pierce through veils may be welcomed, and with a little book a little appeal is made.

If justification were further needed it is twofold. First, the stories do not by any means stand alone; and half a dozen names might be quoted of writers who, to-day, in the short story, persistently turn

aside to listen to the obstinate questionings which will not, for all our din, be stilled; but secondly, the Editor, to whom the privilege of collecting these stories has been entrusted, has had for some time the rare experience of trying them with the living voice on audiences large and small. The response has never in any case been doubtful, though it might be difficult or impertinent to analyse such a lifting of conventional veils. Partly in the hope of passing on an experience like this, and partly with the wish that Michael Wood's other published work might be more widely known, the Editor commends to other story-tellers these diamonds from a mystic mine.

Thanks are given to the Manager of the *Theosophical Review* for permission to reprint the stories in this volume.

September 1915.

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THE WILLOW WEAVER

"I SHALL give you twenty-four hours to vanish in, Campion," said the elder and superior to the younger and inferior. "I can't do more for you than that. Let me tell you very few men in my position would do as much."

He held his finger up impressively.

"It is for the sake of your father that I do this. You ought to be grateful. Twenty-four hours in which to vanish! Of course you must carefully choose the method of vanishing. Under the circumstances I know the way I should take were I in your shoes, but I hesitate to advise you to take it."

The last sentence was in the man's mind, not on his tongue; it produced the most effect because the whole gist of his speech was contained in it, and it was the point about which he was (half unconsciously) anxious. A respectable citizen can hardly suggest to a lad fifteen years his junior that he shall take his own life; it would be difficult, though rather easier, to say to a man of

equal age, " Under your circumstances I should blow my brains out "—and Campion was so young. It might become known, too, that such advice had been given; then people would question the adviser's motives, and what would become of that valuable business asset his respectability; he had foolishly risked it a little already, but that was not known to people whose opinion mattered. It would take wing with the soul of the young man, and his income might even suffer in consequence. Besides he would not like to remember he had advised suicide as a course of action; of course it did not matter if he only thought how conveniently it might smooth the state of affairs.

There were reasons why he did not want this young man, the only child of a very poor and respectable widow, to stand in the dock and have all the circumstances which led to his standing there sifted publicly by a painstaking gentleman intent on obtaining for his client if not acquittal at any rate as light a sentence as possible. The young sinner's immediate superior was not his own master; his employer was uncompromising and old fashioned in his views. He was a man who practised no form of dishonesty or immorality

that might not be decently practised by people of honest and moral repute. He would be hard on Ralph Campion on general business principles, but he would be much harder on one whose years and standing should be a guarantee for his good behaviour and influence over others if the conduct of such an one did not stand the test of public scrutiny. And the personal element would come in, for this man was not only the employer of Ralph Campion's superior but also his father-in-law, and there was his wife's attitude to be remembered besides that of her father; all this might affect his reputation, his business prospects, and his domestic life very seriously. He felt kindly to Ralph Campion. There was the whole point. The affair began with the kindly impulse of a rather coarse man of the world who had "married well" from his point of view and prospered socially and financially by so doing; prosperous himself, he saw no prosperity of any type other than that which he pursued and had pursued since he was Campion's age. Therefore he was kindly according to his own lights. His moral code had nothing to do with his inner convictions; he had no convictions as to the nature of righteousness. His morality was to "get on,"

and it was a tremendous bulwark against obvious criminality. His twelve-year-old son was " backward and delicate," to quote the scholastic advertisements; he sent him to Ralph Campion's father for tuition because the little vicarage stood in a bracing air. He liked and vaguely honoured his boy's tutor—irrationally indeed, for he had certainly not " got on " from the standpoint of the financier. When the man died he obtained for his son, young Campion, that position of trust which he had betrayed. The boy was then nineteen; it was three years ago. The patron did more; still moved by kindliness he took a great deal of notice of his young subordinate. He liked the lad; he confided in him to some extent, increasingly so when he found him to be rather silent; he liked his refinement, at which he laughed—liking it despite his laughter, as coarse people sometimes do like a quality they do not possess. He gave him worldly precepts whereby he might in the future prosper in business. He chaffed him gaily concerning the young ladies of the neighbourhood, pointing out matrimonial prizes which he might have some chance of winning. He showed him a side of life he would probably have passed by unheeded; in so doing

(here was the crux) he showed him a side of his own life that was not generally known. His protégé became in some respects his tool, in some his victim. He found out that betrayal of trust before others did so because he knew which man to suspect, because he knew the circumstances that might cause him to be specially tempted. The story was rather vulgar—sordid—common. From coarse kindliness to selfishness, from selfishness by way of fear to that which was in thought —murder. But yet he liked the boy, and he was sorry for him.

"You mustn't suppose I think you a blackguard, Ralph," he said. "In my private capacity, not as your business head, you know, we're as good friends as ever, my boy. *I* know how things go, bless your life! I know how one gets let in for what one never meant to do at the start. That's one pull a man has who isn't always all that I suppose he ought to be. He knows from his own experience that whatever he may do he has really heaps of good points; and he applies that reasoning to other people when they don't go quite straight, you know. But if you're here when Mr. Warrener comes back I shall have you arrested. I must. I don't know this now, you understand."

The young man drew lines in the ashes of the hearth with a small brass poker. He did not look in the least the sort of person from whom one would expect a criminal to be made; he had what some people would call a " nice face "—comely to look upon, refined, rather sensitive, grave; by no means weak nor yet unintellectual. He looked as though he could think; he looked as though he could love; and he looked as though he could be ashamed of himself and admit the fact both to himself and to other people. These are good signs. He was as white as a sheet, and for the moment he seemed to be stunned rather than repentant.

" If," he said slowly, speaking quietly and unemotionally, " if I do not vanish, but stay here and pay the penalty—I've behaved very badly, and I'm willing to pay it—will you let bygones be bygones—afterwards?"

" Bless my soul, Ralph Campion, you must be a raving ass! It is the ' penalty ' as you call it, that counts. It is not the thing in itself so much. I don't for a moment suppose you to be much worse than most other young fellows. I should think you're better than most."

" I hoped when you'd paid a debt you were

given a receipt, and there was an end of the matter."

"My good fellow! You're old enough and you've seen enough to know that things aren't done that way in this world. I say I don't think you in the least a worse, or perhaps a more dishonest man than I am myself; not the least! But—excuse my bluntness—it's the prison that sticks, it's not the sin."

The young man gave a little start and shiver; the other's bluntness had suddenly brought the whole position, and its future developments, home to him. It was the difference between theoretic and practical knowledge; his white face grew green-white, his hands became limp, and he laid the poker down. These two people sat in the superior's country house on the outskirts of a big smoky town. Young Campion was asked there as a guest in order that his host might tell him he knew him to be a criminal. The boy—for he was little more than a boy—went there suffering qualms of conscience bred of gratitude. He knew his host had not quite the influence on his life that—let us say—Campion's father would have wished to have, but he did not think of excusing his own behaviour on that account. He knew he

had been, and was, doing wrong; it worried him, and he was ashamed of accepting the kindness which led his superior to ask him to stay with him from Saturday till Sunday evening. "My wife's away, staying with her mother," he said to Ralph Campion. "I'm alone. You're looking out of sorts. You'd better come down to me this afternoon; besides, I've something to say to you quietly."

So on Sunday afternoon when Campion was feeling particularly ashamed of himself and very unhappy and perplexed, he said, quietly, what he had to say, and thereby gave his unsuspecting guest a nervous shock which some people may think to be accountable for what followed. That is a matter of opinion, and "thought is free." As aforesaid, there were reasons, serious reasons more important than the life, death, happiness, or pain of young Ralph Campion, why his ill-doing should not be found out till he was dead and incapable of speech.

It was a damp November day; the land was vivid brown and green—green fields, wet brown earth, brown stubble, brown rushes by a little bluish-brown canal, brown-green boughs with bright brown leaves clinging to them here and there.

The Willow Weaver

There had been much rain, the earth was sodden and reeking; there were black, purplish-grey clouds, shot with dull green in the East, and a pale silver-yellow sky in the West. It was early afternoon; the light was clear save where the smoke wreaths of the town brooded in the distance; there was no sunshine.

Ralph Campion looked at the brown-green earth; he did not see it. For the last few minutes his mind swung between two pictures; one of a little wind-swept churchyard where was the grave of an upright man whose name he bore; the other of a wee grey stone house very bleak and trim, standing on a shelterless hillside; therein lived his thin little, meek little old mother, dressed in a scanty black gown and a widow's cap, reading her Bible at night and praying to God for her only son; she did not pray for her husband because he was dead, and she disliked Popery. At last Ralph Campion's eyes filled with tears, and he felt it was time to go. Therefore he rose.

"Very well," he said, "I don't feel very grateful; but I should be so if you could hush it up when I have vanished, so that my—mother mightn't know."

"I shall hush it up if I can." And no man

knew better than he how sincerely he spoke the truth, and how earnestly he regretted it would be impossible to do so. There was no need to tell Ralph it was impossible. " Even if the young idiot were dead it wouldn't be safe not to come out," he thought. " But it would be much safer. If Carry and her father got to know what had led up to his playing the fool like this, and how far I'm responsible (though, of course, I'm not really responsible) there'd be the devil to pay."

Carry was his wife, who was staying with her mother. Aloud he said:

" I've ordered the dog-cart for you. The thing to do will be to say good-bye cordially, you see. Then I shan't know anything till this time to-morrow, when Mr. Warrener comes back."

" If you don't mind shaking hands," said Ralph Campion, listlessly, " of course I don't."

So they shook hands, and the host shouted cheerful and jocular good-speed after the parting guest. Campion left the cart half way to the station; he told the groom to drive on and leave his portmanteau in the cloak-room to be called for. He struck straight across the sodden fields, and walked townwards. It was ten miles to the town; his boots were clogged with dank clay

when he reached the first houses on the outskirts. They were hideous little brick boxes in an unmade road leading nowhere.

Beyond them lay a patch of flat, foul, betrampled, houseless, roadless, grassless ground. It was an expanse of thick sticky mud; on it stood pools of dirty water, held by the clay from sinking into the earth; old bricks (why are ancient broken bricks so peculiarly sordid and depressing in appearance?) and bent rusty tin cans. Over the whole brooded a raw, poisonous, yellow-black fog. Across the waste ground crawled the canal that started in the clean green-brown country; here it ran between a clammy grassless towing path and a brick wall. "Ran" is too jocund a word to describe its action. It crept stickily along, a slimy glaze coating its surface, whereon floated the hairless swollen body of a drowned rat.

Ralph Campion stood at the side of the black canal, and looked at the sheer drop of the brick work. This might be a place in which to vanish. Very few of the words he heard that afternoon lingered with him; but the thought fashioned by the reputable citizen who wished that he was dead, pursued him during the ten mile walk, and was with him still. It was the unspoken words

which Campion remembered; he knew as well as the other the way in which he must disappear. Oddly enough, it never struck him he might have demanded protection as a price for silence; he did not realise that family and business complications might be the result of evidence elicited by cross-examination; simplicity and generosity clave to him still; perhaps this was why the powers were sorry for him and dealt with him mercifully. The place was lonely; it was growing dusk, there were no barges about; the street was but just finished, the houses were unlet. Only—he could swim. He did not want to live to face public shame, and loneliness, and bitter remorse; this was a man who wanted to live an honourable life, and leave an honourable name. But though he wished to die his body would struggle for life, and this conviction struck him with fear lest he was not this body which willed otherwise than he; if so, perhaps he could not kill himself. Well! if there was hell on the other side, at any rate there was not prison, and his friends staring at and cutting him. There could not be superior persons amongst lost souls. The thought was momentarily cheering.

His body would struggle to live; perhaps poison

would be the better way; but drowning might mean accident or murder, whereas if he bought poison——. He took a silk scarf from his pocket and tried to tie his wrists, but his hands were cold and he was clumsy. He flung his watch, chain, and purse into the water—when his body was found their absence would suggest robbery and murder; he kept a little silver loose in his pocket lest poison should after all prove to be the better way.

Suddenly he noticed what, till now, he had not seen. There was a tumble-down hut within a few paces of where he stood; coming towards it was a woman with a huge bundle on her bowed shoulders. As she drew near he saw she carried willow withies; she was a tall old woman, very poorly clad; her feet were naked, and in spite of her burden she walked with a stately step, as lightly as a girl.

This young man was poor, and a criminal to boot, but he was also a gentleman; when he saw this woman, he, though he was thinking of his sins, his despair, and his coming death, showed to her, half mechanically, what all should show at all times, especially to a woman very old and poor, namely, courtesy and helpfulness.

"Let me carry those to the hut," he said. "They are surely much too heavy for you."

"Take them," she said briefly. He took them; they were indeed very heavy. He threw them on the ground by her door.

"You had better enter my hut," she said gravely.

Now there was no reason why Ralph Campion should enter her hut; in fact there was every reason why he should not do so. Nevertheless, he went in. It was not very dark there; by no means so dark as the waning light warranted it should be. There were willow withies on the floor; the woman sat on the ground, leaned against the door-post, and began to weave them.

"Do you weave baskets?" said Ralph Campion.

"I do," she answered. "By some I am called the Willow-weaver."

"You weave fast."

"Naturally. I have had much practice."

She twisted a bent twig as she spoke.

"That twig is crooked," said Ralph. His behaviour was irrational, but a sudden need of hearing human speech had come upon him; and, besides, he liked her voice, which was soothing, soft and deep, like organ notes in the distance.

" It is so," she replied.

" Why don't you throw it away? "

" I throw nothing away. I suffer no waste. I put all my willow twigs to use—crooked or straight."

" But the crooked ones spoil the shape of your basket."

" It is true. They spoil the shape of the basket. I shall put a straight one by the side of the crooked. That balances it a little."

" Still the whole basket is awry."

" It is so."

" It is a pity."

" It is a pity. But it cannot be helped. It will be so till I find nothing and pluck nothing save straight fair-growing withies."

" Where do you pick them? "

" From the floating island in the lake."

" I don't know it. Where is the lake? "

" There," she answered. She waved her hand towards the waste ground with its slimy clay and broken bricks.

" There! Where? "

" There — there — there — my child! " she answered, smiling gravely, and waving her hand again at the immediate foreground. Campion saw she was subject to hallucinations. She was

probably much alone, and certainly very poor. He felt impelled to do what was obviously the very last thing he should have done. He drew out the silk scarf, and his loose silver.

"I will give you these shillings," he said, "if you will tie this tightly round my wrists, and promise, whatever happens, never to tell a soul you have done it. Indeed, it will probably be the worse for you if you do tell."

"I will not take your money," she replied. "To tell you the truth I have no use for it. But I will tie the knot you bid me tie. It is thus with me; the knots with which men charge me to bind them, I can by no means refuse to fasten, but I cannot undo them."

"Tie this knot," he said, with a faint piteous laugh. "And let it remain tied till I ask you to undo it. But first, since you do not want it——"

He flung the silver into the canal.

"Now take my thanks for what you are going to do for me, since you'll take nothing else. Here's the scarf."

She took it. He crossed his wrists, and held them out. She tied the scarf loosely, once.

"I am pleased to do you this service," she said kindly, in her solemn perfect speech, that seemed

unsuited to her poverty and her humble trade. "Chiefly I am pleased because of the honour which is mine, that I should take the place of the dweller in that grey small house on the hill yonder. For, I suppose, were she here, you would beg her, rather than me, to tie this knot."

His crossed wrists fell apart; the silk scarf fluttered to the ground.

"My God! No!" he said, shuddering. "What do you mean? Who are you?"

"The Willow-weaver."

"Do you know her?"

"Of whom do you ask me, my child?"

"My—my mother," he faltered; and now the tears were in his eyes, his throat was choking, and he turned his face from her.

"Surely," she made answer, "I know her well. And because such a mother as this makes my weaving easier, I, the Willow-weaver, shall be mother to her son to-night."

"I do not deserve it," he muttered.

She did not heed him; she wove apace, seated as before, leaning on the door-post of the hut. He fell beside her kneeling, and holding out his hands to her pleadingly:

"Willow-weaver," he cried. "If you know

about her, do you know about me too? Or must I tell you? "

"Surely," she said, "I know about you. Child of so many prayers, of such vain hopes, of so many innocent womanly ambitions never now to be fulfilled, is it not an evil thing that the loving unwise heart in that hill cottage should break through you? Is it not an evil thing in the eyes of a Willow-weaver that one crooked twig should make the whole weaving awry? Yet these things are so, and may not now be changed."

She spoke with sober and stern tenderness. He flung himself on the heap of willow withies, and hid his face from her.

"I know it," he sobbed. "Do you think you need to tell me that? I was going to kill myself when you talked to me of my mother. And what more can I do? What more can I do? "

"You can turn the tide by the waving of your hand," said she. "You can stay the flight of the earth through space; or you can kill yourself. Behold! the one is as possible as either of the others. Will you mend the broken heart in the hill cottage by the way of the black canal? Will you wipe out the shame of a soul by the death of a body? "

He moaned, and thrust his fingers through his hair, clutching and twisting it.

"Be wiser, child," she said. "My words are harsh, my thought is gentle towards you. I said I, the Willow-weaver, would be your mother to-night. What do you see from my hut door, child?"

He raised himself obediently from the withies and told her what he saw.

"And yet there is more to be seen here," she said. "Because there is more I spoke to you harshly, pointing out the ill you had wrought. For I knew that here, even here in this very spot, there is another country whereof you are native born, and wherein you live. Therefore, son of that good mother of whom you and I know, lie at peace upon these withies, cut from the floating island in this lake whereon we look; I shall sing you a cradle song that you may sleep. When you wake the Child's Song shall never wholly leave your ears on this side of that death you sought but now, and you shall break your heart and brain with longing after it in vain. This, for the sake of that good mother, is the Willow-weaver's mercy to you; and you shall find that men, too, have mercy on those who hear in broken snatches the Child's Song."

The power of the woman was upon him; meek and dazed as a tired babe he lay upon the twisted withies; he heard the sound of the twigs as she twisted them in and out in her weaving. He could neither move nor speak; he wondered dreamily whether he lay in a trance or swoon, or whether this was death, and thus the problem of his vanishing was solved without effort of his own. He felt either the light cold touch of her finger tip or the touch of a willow withy between his brows. Suddenly, how and when he did not know, he saw that other country of which the Willow-weaver spake; he had not moved from the spot; he felt sure his body lay on the willow withies in the hut by the canal. He knew it lay there with a burden of sin and folly, of ignorance, shame, and remorse; but they belonged to the place of their brooding, and he, reaching forth in order that he might know, knew them as apart from himself, like a school task learned well or ill, with praise or the rod for its reward. He saw the other country, and this was the fashion of that which he thought he saw. Whether he saw it as it was is another matter.

On every side lay the broad shining levels of a lake of silver, he did not know whether it was

water, or silver fire that had no heat, but was still and cool as the hour before a summer sunrise. He saw no shores nor any boundary set to it; as far as his eyes, or some other sense than sight, would suffer him to perceive, the waters lay. From the lake rose a many-petalled pink blossom; about each petal quivered a delicate fringe of many-coloured flame, and at the heart of the fiery flower that sprang from the water's breast was music. As he saw these things his life passed into them; or else they were the body of his life. Thereupon a certain knowledge came to him, but it was knowledge the man was never able to tell to any one, not even to himself. He heard a high clear voice singing, so he afterwards remembered, but whether it was the Cradle Song of the Willow-weaver, or the speech of the wordless music at the blossom's heart, he could not tell.

It is my belief (I who tell these things) that the words, and indeed the whole matter, were by no manner of means such as are here recorded. He told me the words he heard were something like to these, but he admitted they were not really like them either in sound or sense. This is what he crooned in the day that came after, when men

said his mother-wit had been stolen by the Folk of Peace:

Thou mak'st thy cry to me, thou mak'st thy plea,
I watch the waters of a changeless sea.
Upon its breast I mark a shadow fall,
Wherein a myriad shadows toss and crawl.
Weep'st thou because their turmoil will not cease,
O passing ripple on the Lake of Peace?
I watch the toiling shadows fight and strive,
I hear the murmur of a Dream-world hive.
Why is their warfare more to thee than me,
Thou wave that risest from a boundless sea?
No shadow-battle stirs the silent breast
Of the deep waters of the Lake of Rest.
Where mourning shadows throng the dreary side
Of the black river's foul and sluggish tide,
I see the shining of the Silver Peace,
I hear its music bid their moaning cease.
Thy fair is foul to me, thy foul is fair;
Thy songs are cries, thy joys are pain-fraught care;
Thy griefs are gladness, and thy woes are gain,
Thy deaths are jewels in an age-long chain.
Thy sins but shadows on the waters wide,
Thy virtues gleams upon the silent tide.

When those twenty-four hours in which Ralph Campion was to vanish were ended, he came wandering, hatless, over the green-brown fields in the drenching rain; he was soaked to the skin, but he did not seem to know this. He asked to see his superior and elder, who was even then in serious consultation with his father-in-law and employer. When this man, Mr. Warrener, heard

Ralph Campion was there he was glad. He was a plain dealing person, and he thought when people did wrong and were found out it was good for them to be punished. His son-in-law on the other hand was sorry and alarmed.

"Show Mr. Campion in," said the older of the two men who were discussing Ralph Campion's sins. Mr. Campion came in, dripping. He smiled, greeted his hosts, and tried to explain what had happened and why he had not vanished. The two listeners looked at each other silently; to do the younger of the twain justice he seemed to be shocked and dismayed. There was a pause. The elder laid his hand on Ralph Campion's shoulder: "Sit down, Campion," he said gently. "Sit down and keep quiet. You're dripping wet, you know; you'll be ill, you must see the doctor. I'll send for him at once. There's no need for you to worry about anything." Then he drew his son-in-law out of earshot.

"This must be hushed up," he whispered. "You see what's happened to him. He's off his head. Didn't you see it yesterday? Where are his people? They must be sent for, and the doctor too. I'll telephone to him at once. Whether this is a cause or an effect I don't know. Be charitable

and assume the first. Anyway we will say nothing; he's not responsible for what he did."

It was more of a truth than he knew. The other man, white as a sheet, assented eagerly.

Certain superstitious folk of Celtic blood said that the son of the sorrowful, patient little old widow who lived with his mother in the small grey house on the windswept hill above the churchyard, had wandered in the "gentle places" whence no man ever returns to the human habitations; only the bodily seeming of such a man comes back; he is away with the "good people"; at night he dances in their mystic rings and makes merry with them in the heart of the hills. This, they said, was the case with Ralph Campion, for he had the look of eternal childhood on his face and the fairy fire was in his eyes. But they were wrong; it was with him, as the Willow-weaver said; the Cradle Song of the Children of the Lake of Peace would not wholly leave his ears, and because he could not recall nor sing it perfectly he wandered bewildered, trying vainly to interpret its broken snatches, with labouring brain and longing, breaking heart.

THE BENDING OF THE TWIG

EARLY in the morning of the hot July day there had been a sea-mist, and the fog lay on the horizon like a rolled banner gleaming with ineffable tints of opalescent purple. The glassy sea was purest blue, save where the shimmering paths of the currents shone silver-white or where the lap and fret of waves at the cliff foot made the water pink with Devon earth. The weed on the rocks glowed orange-brown in the dazzling light, and the dark line of the low-flying shag gave the only sombre touch to the brilliant hues of land, sea, and sky. The turf sweet with the breath of wild thyme, and studded with pale yellow rock rose, crept well-nigh to the water's edge. Here a hundred years ago the sea had claimed tribute of the earth, and a big landslip rent the bosom of the patient mother. Half a mile of cliff had fallen, and in the chasm thus made, now filled full with greenery and prodigal growth of fern, bramble, and berry, a long white house stood sun-bathed and creeper-clad.

The Bending of the Twig

A little spring sprang seawards from the cliff, tinkling in a baby waterfall down grey rocks splashed with orange lichen, and forming in a small crystal pool ere it ran on to lose itself in the greyish-white sand of the shore.

By this little pool sat three children: two flaxen-haired girls and a small dark-haired grey-eyed boy. The girls lay on the ground; their chins resting on their clasped hands, their eyes round, blue, and awestruck. The boy knelt stiffly on the verge of the pool, his eyes looking straight out over the sea, his hands linked behind his head. He was a slim little child with a small pale face, delicate irregular features, and long-lashed grey eyes.

"They came up," he was saying, "up the little path that comes from the shore. They left their boats on the beach. They broke down our doors, making a great noise. The doors fell down; I heard them fall; I could hear the others shrieking as the men killed them. I was painting, you know; I painted coloured letters round a face which was in the middle. I drew the face myself; it was a white face with gold all round it. The men broke into my room and killed an old man who was there with me. I stood with my back

against the wall. I put out my hands, so; I had no sword, and—and—then they killed me . . ."

The child broke off abruptly; he gasped, threw himself face downwards on the turf sobbing either with grief or excitement. The audience drew a long breath. Never—never—never—in all the annals of the nursery had even the most gifted grown-up person told them such tales as did this, their small orphan cousin.

"What's the matter now," said a man's voice. "Quarrelling? Dennis, why are you crying?"

Three people had unheard approached the little group; a man, a young girl, and a boy. The man and boy were sufficiently alike to be easily recognisable as father and son. The boy was seventeen or eighteen years old; handsome, vigorous, and graceful. He carried a gun; he had been shooting rabbits on the cliffs, and two little helpless brown bodies dangled from his left hand. The man was past middle age, but time alone had not carved the straight, severe lines about his mouth, nor made his eyes so cold. That was the work of temperament; the comely lad beside him would never have such lips and eyes, though the tinting and moulding of the two faces were very much the same.

The crying child scrambled to his feet blushing and half laughing; his grief had not been very deeply rooted. The youngest girl clinging to her father's hand cried out eagerly in praise of the tale; "Dennis tells us such lovely stories, daddy."

The boy with the gun threw the rabbits on the grass. "Kitty's quite right," he said. "They're ripping. I can't think how he gets hold of them. He says they're true." "He says they happened to him," broke in the enthusiastic auditor. "And he tells us what he sees too. O Dennis, tell them about the little men you saw in the mist this morning."

The dark brows of the elder listener drew together.

"Look here, Dennis," he said shortly, "if you prefer to tell stories to the girls rather than go rabbiting with the boys"—there was a little touch of contempt in the voice—"of course there's no harm in that; but you must not say what is untrue."

"But it is true," said the child eagerly. "It is true, Uncle Hugh. That did happen to me; it did really. It was a grey house by the sea, and they killed me in the room where I was painting."

"Take care, Dennis. When did this happen, may I ask?"

"I—I don't know, Uncle Hugh."

"Nor any one else. Did you tell the girls it was true?"

"It is true," said Dennis, beginning to pant and rock from heel to toe and back again. "It is quite true."

"It is, is it? And you see little men in the mist, eh?"

"I did this morning."

"And he sees pictures in the water," broke in one of the listening children.

"Do you see pictures in the water, Dennis?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"In that water for instance? Look and see."

The child knelt down and stared into the pool.

"I don't"—he began after a pause. "Yes. I do, yes I do, I see a little house and a cornfield and a—O, there it's gone!"

The man laid his finger-tips lightly on the child's shoulder. "Get up and listen to me," he said gravely. Dennis rose; the touch had not been at all rough; on the contrary it was very gentle, and the voice was quiet, but there was a sense of danger in the air; an ominous thrill; and the

child's eyes, why he knew not, grew slightly frightened.

"What you have just said is a lie," said his elder very distinctly, "and you know that just as well as I do; you are very young yet, and I don't want to be hard on you. If you confess that you told a lie, I won't say any more about it, unless you do it again. Come."

"But—I can't. It wasn't a lie."

"Take care now. Tell me you said what wasn't true and are sorry; and then run into tea and forget about it."

The child began to tremble. "But I can't—it wasn't—indeed—it—O dear, O dear!"

"I tell you I don't want to be hard upon you. I mean to be, and I hope I always am, perfectly just. I shall ask you three times whether your stories are true. If you say no—well and good. If you persist in saying yes, you'll—take the consequences, that's all. I shall ask you this question every day till I make you speak the truth."

Things were now looking very serious. The little girls were struck with awe. The young girl and the lad exchanged glances and strove to extenuate the crime of Dennis.

"O please, Mr. March," said the girl softly, "he's so very little and he's imaginative, you know."

"He's dotty, poor little chap," said the boy cheerily. "He means no harm, dad. He'll be all right when he goes to school. Let him off this once."

"He has the matter in his own hands. Now then, Dennis, are these tales of yours true?"

"Yes," faltered the quivering lips.

"Once more, are they true?"

"They are true! they are true! What shall I do? If you kill me, they're true."

"I'm not at all likely to kill you, but I mean to cure you of lying. It's obstinacy; for you must know you've told lies. Are these things true?"

"Y—ye—I mean—I think so," hedged poor Dennis desperately.

"Go into the house," said the man with a push. "You've brought it on yourself, and it serves you right."

Consolatory reflection. The child slunk into the house crying bitterly. The girl attempted further intercession.

"It's no good, Kate," said the man angrily.

" I'm shocked at the child's obstinacy. He has told a gratuitous falsehood, and he must, as I said, take the consequences."

So Dennis took the consequences, and woke up at night shrieking with nightmare as their direct result. Daily the same question was put to him, and received the same answer which produced the same pains and penalties, save that they grew a little more grievous daily because of the increasing blackness of his sin. Dennis went about with a white face and silent tongue; his eyes were red and swollen, and there were purple rings under them. At last on the fifth day the child breaking down confessed himself to be a wilful and egregious perverter of the truth.

" Why couldn't you have said that before?" said Hugh March. " Now speak the truth in future, there's a good boy."

Dennis promised that he certainly would do so, and went away to cry over his first lie. He knew that lying was a grievous sin; and the preacher under whom the March family " sat " predicted a fiery doom for sinners. Dennis cried over his probable damnation; but the undying worm and quenchless fire of a vengeful God were far away, whereas Hugh March's birch was

horribly near; so Dennis risked eternity for the sake of comparative well-being in time.

It must not be supposed that March was the typical wicked uncle of nursery tales; he was sincerely anxious to be kind to his dead brother's little boy. The "queerness" of Dennis was a source of concerned perplexity to his guardian. Perry, his own son, whom he idolised, was an athlete rather than a scholar, and March was glad of the fact; nevertheless he would have been satisfied with his fragile non-athletic nephew if he had shown signs of studiousness; but the child was not clever; he was backward, lazy, and dreamy; his only talents were a gift for drawing and an eye for colour effects, which were "mere accomplishments" in the eyes of his uncle. Dennis had no other gifts unless his stories presaged a future novelist.

Dennis, on his side, was stunned and terrified by his uncle's treatment of his powers of vision. His Irish mother, like her son, possessed "the sight," and she had treated his visions as simple facts, which were by no means extraordinary; hence the child was not vain of the gift, nor did he dream of boasting of or colouring his visions. When his mother died and he came to live with

his uncle and cousins, he came simply and confidingly as to friends; unsuspicious of the possibility of harshness, inexperienced in aught save tenderness. To be suddenly denounced as an obstinate liar, to be flogged because he saw things which his cousins did not see, not only terrified but stupefied him. He relapsed into bewildered silence, and bent all his small powers of deception to conceal his power of vision.

Hitherto "the sight" had been spasmodic; but either from some influence of climate or because of his nervous tension it now became almost unintermittent; he saw very often, and the strain of concealment troubled him. The visions were in a measure consolatory; that which he saw did not frighten him, and he lived in a world of sound, colour, and light, which was unshared by his companions. The child was very lonely, for he feared to talk much lest he should betray himself; nevertheless he became gradually aware of the fact that he had one staunch and kindly friend. This was his cousin Perry.

Perry was a good humoured, genial and sympathetic soul; his very superabundant vigour and strength gave him a chivalrous sense of pitiful

protection towards the poor little frightened nervous child.

Once at a picnic on the Head, Dennis began to watch some little folk who were unseen by the others. Suddenly he became aware that Perry was watching him with puzzled eyes and knitted brows. Dennis started, his vision vanished, and he lay quivering with fear lest Perry should ask him what he had been looking at with such interest. But Perry did not ask; he smiled at his little cousin, and turned his eyes away.

After the picnic that night a party sat on the verandah and told ghost stories of a grisly nature. Dennis grew frightened, the " other world " was real to him; this grim aspect of it was terrible. He did not understand the things he saw, and the dread of seeing the horrors described in the tales fell upon him. The nervous system of a sensitive child is a delicate instrument, though it is sometimes the custom to treat it as though it were constructed of equal parts of whalebone, steel, and cast-iron. The stream of tales ran dry.

" What's become of all your fine stories, Dennis? " said one of the circle mockingly; one who knew of the little tragedy enacted a month ago. " I'm afraid I've spoilt the flow of Dennis's

genius," said March, and the laugh rippled round the circle at the expense of the young seer. Is this world so purely joyous that we should forget our heavenly heritage if our brethren did not try now and then to give us a little pain, even though it be a tongue stab to make us less contented with our earthly bliss? It would seem that there be many who think so. Perry put forth an arm in the darkness and laid it round the child's neck.

" That's a beastly shame," he said to the first speaker.

They were only four homely schoolboy words; it was only the touch of a strong kindly young arm, but they drew forth a disproportionate flood of adoring gratitude from the child's sensitive heart. Therefore when he went to bed that night he ventured to ask a favour of Perry. In Dennis's room there was an unpleasant-looking green and yellow curtain, which had a reprehensible habit of swaying when there was not any wind. Ghost stories had made that curtain a thing of horror to Dennis; he feared it would draw back very slowly one of these days, and he should see some hideous object gibbering behind it — a class of vision of which he had formerly never dreamed.

He once asked whether the curtain might be taken away: but as he could assign no reason for his request he was told " not to be silly," and the curtain, like the poor, remained with him always. Alas! for the dumb terrors, the helpless inarticulateness of the soul of a young misunderstood child.

To-night he took courage.

" Perry," he said, " won't you come and stay with me till I'm asleep? "

Since the five days' holy war which March had waged with Dennis the child had stammered slightly; it was a pathetic little falter of the tongue and Perry felt vaguely touched by it. He looked at him questioningly. At last he said:

" Why? Well, never mind. Right you are."

He entered the room whistling, and by some instinct drew the green and yellow curtain back. Dennis undressed and slipped into bed. Perry knelt down, put his arm over the child and spoke kindly:

" You're not very happy here, Den," he said; " what's the matter with you? "

Dennis bit his lip and closed his eyes; at last by dint of coaxing Perry arrived at the fact that Dennis was mourning over the sin of deceit.

"That wasn't much," said Perry immorally but cheerfully.

He hesitated, then he said in a whisper:

"I say, Denny, which was the lie, eh?"

He felt the slender body beneath his arm start, quiver, and grow unnaturally still.

"Was it a lie that you saw those things or that you didn't see them, which?"

"Th-that I saw th-them."

There was a pause. Then Perry said gently:

"Poor little chap; it's a shame. All right old man. Go to sleep; I'll stay with you."

To himself he said: "Who's to blame for that lie, Den or the dad?"

The holidays were nearly over; Perry was about to return for his last term to Harrow and Dennis was going for his first term to a preparatory school. Before his final departure Perry was going to walk fifteen miles in order to stay for a couple of days with some friends. A week before this visit there was a farewell picnic at the Head. It was a lovely day and the sea was blue and calm. Perry was on the cliff building the fire for the picnic tea; Dennis was on the rocks below. Then he turned and ran; he rushed up the cliff path sobbing out that there was a

drowned man in the water below. Of course March, Perry, and three or four young men ran to the shore only to see the water rippling peacefully in and the brown weed swaying with the lazy tide.

March shouted to the child on the cliff:

" Come here."

Dennis obeyed him shuddering still.

" There's no drowned man here," said March sternly. " Why did you say there was? "

The child caught his breath with a jerk and his face grew white as ashes. The thing he so dreaded had come; he had betrayed himself. He glanced imploringly at his only hope—Perry, and his lip quivered.

" It was the weed he saw," said Perry. " He's always fanciful and nervous you know."

" Nonsense," said March. " These are his old tricks. I thought I'd cured you of this, Dennis."

He left the shore with an angry glance at the child.

Dennis began to cry, and Perry laid a hand on his shoulder. Dennis clutched his arm.

" O Perry," he wailed, " do go to him. Do speak to him. Do tell him I'm sorry. I'd n-never have said what I saw if I hadn't thought everybody could see it t-too."

"I thought so," said Perry under his breath; "you do see these things and you pretend you don't for fear of a licking."

"Don't tell. Please don't tell; dear Perry, d-don't tell."

"All right, don't cry. I'll speak to the governor."

But Perry spoke in vain. March was an obstinate thick-headed man, and he was very angry indeed. The vials of his righteous wrath descended on the luckless seer, who was utterly broken and unnerved in consequence. Perry also was very angry though not with the helpless little victim of March's dull wits. When three days after the child's punishment a drowned sailor was actually washed up at the Head, Perry boldly avowed his belief in the visions of Dennis. March was as angry with Perry as it was possible for him to be with his idolised only son. He made many acute and scathing remarks about ignorance, superstition, and naughty, lying, hysterical children whose imagination and hysteria must be crushed with the strong hand of authority.

Perry went away in a very bad temper, and Dennis remained behind in such a state of abject terror that he hardly dared to grasp his coffee

cup when it was offered to him at the breakfast table lest it should prove to be an elusive and unshared vision.

On the evening of Perry's departure Dennis stood at the door of his uncle's study trying to make up his mind to go in. Like many men who never read anything save the daily paper March had a " study." At last Dennis went in. March who was writing a letter looked up:

" Well, Dennis, what is it? "

" H-have you heard from Perry, Uncle? " stammered the child.

" Heard from Perry! The boy's daft. He only left this morning."

" O," said Dennis nervously, " y-yes, so he did; I f-forgot."

And he crept out again like a frightened mouse.

The next morning a telegram arrived for Perry which his father opened; it was from the friends with whom he was supposed to be staying asking the reason of his non-arrival; Perry was going over to play in a cricket match; hence their agitation. March rode over to them at once. Perry had not arrived; inquiries on the road gained no tidings of him. Search was made for him throughout that day and through the night

and through the next day and still there was no news of Perry.

For the first time in his life March was shaken to the finest fibre of his soul. His son was the apple of his eye, the best beloved of all his children. He felt a tremor of the nerves which he would have called weakness and affectation in another. When on the third night the searchers returned with no tidings of the young man, March went to his room with a grey-hued face and eyes that were glazed with agony and suspense. He sat at his table and bowed his head upon it. He tried to pray—March was a somewhat conventionally religious man—but he could only groan. In the room above where was the green and yellow curtain the child knelt by the side of the bed shaking from head to foot, the drops of agony standing on his forehead. The soul which was so much older than the little body was wrestling in the throes of a complex passion of love and personal cowardly dread; the poor little ten-year old body could scarcely support the strain.

In the afternoon, two hours after Perry had left, Dennis knelt by the little pool and chanced to look therein. Before his eyes a picture grew. It was Perry stunned and lifeless lying in a

hollow, the mouth of which was hidden by elder bushes with their luscious black berries. It was a narrow rocky crevasse formed by the rending slipping land. Everything about the picture was very clear; on the hill above the hollow was an old pine tree twisted into a strange shape; there was a bent bough on it on which a human form dangled—a dead man hanged by the neck to the bent tree. This was the vision that had driven Dennis to his uncle's room; since then the picture appeared to him again and yet again. Sometimes the hanged man was not there, but the scene was always the same point for point. Even now as he knelt it formed itself between him and the green and yellow curtain.

The child sobbed and twisted his fingers in his hair. In his ears rang the stern words: "If I hear a whisper of this again I shall write very strongly to Mr. Brownlow and warn him of your untruthfulness."

Mr. Brownlow was Dennis's future schoolmaster and poor Dennis pictured himself as being pilloried and held up for execration before a whole community of youthful devotees of truth. But then there was Perry. Perry had been kind to him; Perry had banished the terrors of the green

and yellow curtain; had tried to screen him from wrath. If only some one else could see! His Highland nurse had told him "the sight" was God's gift. If only He would give that gift to some one else; to some one who would not be punished and scolded because of his possession. Dennis had prayed on this subject with a child's unreasoning and sometimes unreasonable faith, and now he once more extended his clasped hands and sobbed into the darkness:

"O do-do-do make some one else see instead of me."

But no one else saw, and the burden, responsibility, and terror of a gift, whatsoever be its nature, lay heavily on the slender shoulders of Dennis. Therefore the end was inevitable. All strong powers lie upon the men who possess them like mighty compelling forces unless the man be stronger than the gift. To Dennis and to no other was the vision; as he closed his streaming eyes it slowly formed itself once more. He staggered to his feet and made for the room below; the force was stronger than he, or else he was stronger than his weak nerves and trembling body. Though March should beat him within an inch of his fragile life he must tell that which he saw. He did not

hesitate now; he opened the door and went straight in. March raised his head, started, and stood up.

"Dennis! Bless my soul, child, what are you doing at this hour? Not undressed. Are you ill."

"Uncle Hugh," said Dennis, steadying himself by the table edge, "I—I know where Perry is. At least I think so."

"You know where Perry is. What do you mean?"

The child began to describe the place of his vision and March listened with growing interest and excitement; when Dennis spoke of the pine and the dangling figure he sprang up:

"It's the highwayman's pine," he almost shouted; "they say a man was hanged there a hundred years ago. But I'll take my oath you've never been there. How do you know the place?"

"I s-saw it," faltered Dennis, and having thus betrayed his evil-doing he swung forward and fainted. When he recovered he was lying on a sofa and March was pouring water on his face.

"Lie still," he said kindly. "Don't be frightened. You must have been dreaming, you know. I—I think I'll go to this place you dreamed of. It is superstition, of course, but er—er——"

March called a maid to tend the child; then he summoned the men who had been searching through the day and led them on another quest. This time they found the missing lad. He was insensible and his leg was broken.

The next day the doctor spoke gravely of the condition of his patient. " I am very much afraid his condition is serious," he said. " If he had been cared for at once recovery would have been quite certain; but he has been lying there half-stunned and without food, drink, or care four days and nights."

March did not speak; possessed by a sudden thought he sought his nephew.

" Dennis, child," he said, " when did you first see the place where we found Perry? "

" The day he left."

" Why didn't you tell me at once what you saw? Perry's very ill from lying there four days."

" I'm sorry," murmured Dennis, " I—I thought you'd, you'd——"

" You thought I should be angry? "

" Y-yes, I was afraid."

He did not know how innocently he avenged himself and paid off old scores. March was silent

for a minute, then he said in a low voice: " It's just. It's my own fault."

He stooped and took the child's face gently between his hands, kissed his forehead and went out alone to wrestle with his pain and anxiety.

. . . . . .

As this tale began so it ends at the pool in the landslip. Perry lay beside the stream apparently none the worse for his fall of the year before. Dennis sitting cross-legged beside the little rock basin watched the water. March was talking with his son; following the direction of Perry's smiling eyes he saw Dennis. Dennis's pictures were less frequent now and his " stories " were less marvellous. The press of outer interest which crowded in was doing its work. March looked at the boy as he rose and stood beside him and laid his hand on his head:

" Seeing pictures? " he asked with a half-mocking laugh. March's position was a very illogical one and he was semi-conscious of the fact. The child looked up and nodded.

" What nonsense," said March, " it's all fancy. If there was anything to see why shouldn't I see it? "

" Come, father," said Perry laughing, " why can't I tell ' Rule Britannia ' from ' God save the King? ' "

" Nonsense! I tell you it's a rampant medieval superstition that's got hold of you. As for Denny he's a little donkey."

But he laughed and pulled the boy's hair with a gentle hand; which seems to prove that one is not necessarily incapable of learning even after one has " come to forty years."

Note.—This story is founded on fact. That is to say, although it is mine as regards characters and incidents, the *motif*, the clairvoyance of the child, is true. The drastic methods which were employed for the repression of the gifts of the luckless little seer are also facts, and that is the reason I wrote the story.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SON OF MAN

Lord God of Glory, Pow'r of Perfect Light,
Look on Thy little children of the wild,
In whose frail souls the Son of Man is born
Thine is the pow'r of pain and anguish, Lord,
Thine is the chrysm of the agony,
The bitter wisdom born within the soul
That knows the sorrow of sin's piteous load.
Father in Heaven, blessed be the hour
When in the beast-soul rises the sad voice
Of human shame, crying: " I will arise,
And seek my Father's feet, and mourn my sin."
Blessed the hour when the dread scourge of pain
Is gladly borne by some poor tortur'd soul,
Because it sees its foulness before Thee
By the white light of Christ, Who dwells within
The outrag'd temple of humanity.

THERE was wrath and distress in the House of the Cold Strand by reason of the sin of Brother Gorlois He was the child of the Holy House, taken into the pious nurture of the brethren, from the dead breast of his murdered mother, a heathen woman, found by Brother Pacificus lying dead in the undergrowth of the great forest nigh the House of the Cold Strand. The pious company of Christian monks, who had built their house of prayer in that land, baptised the babe, and reared

him by the precepts of Solomon, by the rule of their House, and by the wisdom which flowed from their hearts. And when the Brother Gorlois was twelve years old he entered his noviciate, and when he was fifteen he took upon him the vows of a monk, namely, the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. He had little wit, and was not studious; nor was he called to the way of contemplation, but he was strong, and waxed mighty of muscle. As he grew to manhood the good gift of comeliness was bestowed upon him by the Hand of God, and the thick crisp waves of his curly yellow hair rose up like billows around his head.

He liked to trap and fish for the Holy House, but when the glee of sport was passed he was lazy and loved to sleep. He gave the first occasion for scandal during a fast of twice forty days, wherein the brethren ate no flesh. This Brother Gorlois, stealing forth on the eighth day, slew a coney, and was taken in the wood, having built a fire in order that he might cook and devour it to the gratification of his body, and the peril of his soul; moreover, he lied concerning his sin, scandalously, and indeed foolishly, for it was manifest to the simplest, and denial was vain.

The second scandal was when the Brother Gorlois was found in the refectory drunk with wine; for this offence he did penance, being scourged, and sorely rebuked by the brethren. But the third and most grievous scandal was when he was taken in the forest with the swineherd's daughter; whereupon the brethren placed him in ward, whilst they debated whether or no a monk who had broken his vows to the shame of his House, should not lie within a narrow cell, the entrance whereof should be securely barred by mortised stones, that soul and body might part slowly in the terrors of a death by hunger and by thirst. Such was the fate adjudged to Brother Gorlois, who was then but a young man of twenty years, and he was brought forth, bound, to hear the same.

The Brother Gorlois was, as aforesaid, young and lusty, comely and of great stature; he looked sullen, but he was less fearful and less ashamed than might have been expected. God had granted to him vigorous youth, health, and a person as goodly to behold as those He had given to the great stags on the moor, and the mighty milk-white bulls which crashed through the forest, leading a drove of their kind; but He in His

Wisdom had not yet given to Brother Gorlois the blessing (or curse) of a lively power of imagery, and a sensitive memory.

Still he had been taken, as he knew, in what the brethren denounced as sin, and he knew they were so made that they visited sin by fasting, and by the scourge, to the Brother Gorlois' great dis-ease; for he loved food, and he esteemed the scourge to be a needless discomfort. Therefore he looked very sulky, and stood gazing upon his feet, and wishing vaguely that his arms were free.

Then he who was Head of the lonely little House of the Cold Strand rose to pronounce the doom of Brother Gorlois, when the aged Brother Pacificus uplifted his voice. It was the Brother Pacificus who had found Brother Gorlois a young babe upon the dead breast of the half-savage heathen woman, his mother.

Brother Pacificus was very old, and a reputed seer; esteemed as a saint was he; twenty years had he travelled over Europe carrying the Gospel of the Christ among heathen people; founding many a Holy House, but never taking the Headship of any; thirty years lived he as a hermit, supplicating God for the world; ten years he had dwelt at the House of the Cold Strand, speaking

little and praying much; but during the last year he spoke more frequently and more freely, and the Head of the House of the Cold Strand consulted him reverently as his soul-friend, what though in that House he was his superior in religion.

" It is in my mind, holy father," said Brother Pacificus, " that we have sinned greatly against our Brother Gorlois, and owe him amends."

" Speak thy mind, my brother, therefore," said he who was the Head of the House. " Make plain to us wherein we have sinned, and he shall live."

" My father," said the Brother Pacificus, " this, our young brother, so lusty in his youth, is not bound by his vows, seeing that in truth he took them not upon him."

" Who then took them, venerable brother? "

" Verily, that did we," said Brother Pacificus; " for we knew their meaning, our Brother Gorlois did not so. He, obeying babe-like those who nurtured him, uttered words of which his heart knew not the meaning. For it is written that once a man of God made a religious house in the wilderness and bound by vows Brother Fox, binding him to a religious life, and to eat no flesh; the which vow he broke, adding to this offence the

sin of theft, for so mightily desired he to eat flesh that he ate the leathern shoe-straps of his superior in religion, namely, the holy saint; whereupon the holy man rebuked him for conduct unbefitting a monk, when it was revealed to him that no vow can make a religious of a beast of the field; the blame is his who bindeth a little brother by a harsh rule against which the nature which God hath given constraineth him. Wherefore let our Brother Gorlois abide with us in peace, doing such tasks as his youth and great thews and sinews make very fitting for him; but do not bind him to eat no flesh, nor drink wine, nor even forbid him to seek the love of a maid, for to these things the youth's nature mightily constraineth him; nor doth he perceive in any measure the beauty of holiness, nor desireth he to enter into the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold! he is no monk; though his lips spake vow on vow, God would not register them in Heaven as we foolish men do on earth; this Brother Gorlois is but a lad, and in his heart a heathen, like the woman who bore him. Nevertheless he is the child of our House. His hour is not yet. Spare him, my father, and let us not—we who follow Him who bade the woman go

unhurt and sin no more—give our child to a cruel death. For we took him in God's name, and in the Power of that Name shall he dwell amongst us unhurt and forgiven."

Now no other voice in the Holy House would have been heard on behalf of Brother Gorlois save only that of Brother Pacificus. But to his voice the brethren listened with heed, and now his counsel prevailed, and they spared the Brother Gorlois, and absolved him from his vows, bidding him remain in the House of the Cold Strand, doing such work as his youth and strength rendered fitting for him. Thus then Brother Gorlois was pardoned by the holy father who ruled the brethren. This holy father was a man of great zeal, and jealous for the fair repute of the House, and often he mourned to Brother Pacificus because the soul of the House was barren, and he knew not by what means the brethren could make thereof a mightier power in the Hand of the Lord. But Brother Pacificus said:

"The soul of a Holy House, my father, is like unto the Kingdom of God; it cometh not with observation. It is from the beginning, and to hold this diligently in our minds in all that is possible

for us to do in this matter. Let us then act as our nature constraineth us, under the guidance of the Lord, remembering all natures are rooted in Him, and it may ofttimes be our duty to suffer gladly, as His servant, one who sorely opposes us; now this is hard for the natural man, but the Lord from Heaven useth the one and the other for His service according to the measure of their gifts, asking not wit from him who lacketh, nor clerkly lore from the simple, nor the power of the spirit from him who is yet a babe in Christ. Nor can we expect to know the subtle workings of our brethren's souls, and though it be our duty to dwell in sympathy with them when we may, yet ofttimes it is our duty sweetly to resign ourselves to dwell in ignorance of them. But the soul of a House of Prayer is born from above, not from below, and this, meseemeth, is the meaning of that Scripture which saith a man by taking thought can add not a cubit to his stature."

It was summer time when the sin of Brother Gorlois was judged by the brethren; the following winter was very cold, and the Brother Pacificus grew feebler. When the spring came he was very infirm; he slept little, and it grew a custom that

a brother should watch beside him to minister to him in the night. On a moonlit night of May Brother Gorlois was bidden to keep vigil by the old man's side. Brother Pacificus slept lightly during the first watch of the night. Brother Gorlois rose up gently and looked from the little unglazed casement upon the forest. It was a warm night, the glamour of the moon lay on the great silent glades. Brother Gorlois felt restless, and upon him was a desire to rove the forest. The oaks were in leaf, the smell of bluebells filled the air, the fierce life of night and springtide was pulsing apace through the dim sweet land; it was a night when all the beasts of the forest did roam, seeking their bread from God.

Brother Gorlois leaned out, and smelled the night air and the earth; then he drew back and sat by the old monk.

Something flew through the casement and hit Brother Gorlois on his broad chest; it was a bunch of bluebells. Brother Gorlois looked out once more. Below the window was the swineherd's daughter; the night was sultry, and her smock was open by reason of the heat; her skirt was made of the stitched skins of beasts; about her neck was a garland of blue flowers of the wood,

swaying rope-like about her throat. When she saw Brother Gorlois she laughed loudly and fled, but as she fled she looked back. Then Brother Gorlois leaped from the window. When she heard the beat of his feet behind her she ran faster; nevertheless, as she ran she dragged the blue-bells from about her throat and flung them earthwards to mark the way by which she went. Soon the thicket hid her, and Brother Gorlois, flying in pursuit, was hidden too.

A little while after the flight of Brother Gorlois, the Brother Pacificus stirred.

" My son," he said faintly, " give me to drink, I pray thee."

No one answered, and the old man murmured:

" He is young, he sleeps."

He sighed, for his mouth was very parched and dry. After a while he said again:

" My son, sleepest thou? Wake, I pray thee."

But no one answered, and he said:

" My voice is weak, and the sleep of youth is heavy. O Lord, Thy chosen slept in the hour of Thy agony; how didst Thou thirst, O Master, and there was none to succour Thee, save with the bitter vinegar and gall! "

After a while the old monk's thirst grew

grievous, and he strove, slowly and tremulously, to raise his aged limbs.

"It is but a little way to yonder jug," he murmured, "I am a selfish old man; the lad is tired with toil. I will seek the water for myself."

He rose slowly, groped a pace or two, stumbled, and fell to the floor of his cell. He lay there, moaning a little now and then, and shivering. Thus did he lie during two hours of the night; and thus Brother Gorlois found him when he slunk back, just as day broke. In great terror he called the brethren, praying God that the old man had not known his absence, or at least would be speechless till the end. But Brother Pacificus, though all might see his death was near, recovered speech and clearness of mind, and received the last rites of the Church. Then said he:

"My brethren, ye are weary. Leave me to await the coming of my Lord and Master. I shall die this night when midnight strikes. Wherefore at that hour go ye to the chapel, and speed my soul with songs of holy joy; and leave with me, I pray you, Brother Gorlois."

Then they obeyed, weeping; but the Head said:

"Dare we trust thee, beloved brother, with this youth?" and sternly he said to Brother Gorlois:

"Slept ye not, nor had left our holy brother when this sickness increased upon him?"

Then Brother Gorlois lied; and Brother Pacificus smiled very tenderly upon him and said:

"Nay, ye shall leave me, my father, with the babe I found."

When the brethren were gone, Brother Pacificus said:

"Come near to me, my child, and lift me in thy arms, for I breathe hardly."

Brother Gorlois obeyed, and Brother Pacificus said:

"Wherefore left ye me, my son and little brother? The pain was sore as I lay yonder; and that ye might have spared me. But in truth I sinned in lack of patience; nevertheless, the thirst which was upon me was great when I strove to fetch the water, that I might drink a little to cool my tongue."

The old man spoke very feebly, a word or two and then a long pause; but when he had spoken Brother Gorlois knew Brother Pacificus had per-

ceived his absence. He said no word, but hung his head. He perceived there was no fear that Brother Pacificus would betray him. And yet he hung his head; there grew up about his heart a feeling new and strange, and he felt very wroth with the swineherd's brown daughter.

"See thy penance, child," said Brother Pacificus. "Hold me in thy arms; thus I breathe more freely."

Brother Gorlois said nothing, not even when the cramp in his arms grew great.

The old man fell into a stupor; but sometimes he wandered a little. He would moan and say:

"My son—Gorlois—my son—where are thou?"

Sometimes he would say:

"I thirst—alone—Thou, Lord, wast left——"

And Brother Gorlois, albeit dull of wit, saw he was living through the pain and loneliness of the past night. Brother Gorlois did not ask the old monk's pardon; he did not know he wanted him to forgive; he knew his heart felt heavy; he began to wish the Head might find out what he had done, and have him flogged; and he felt more and more wroth with the swineherd's daughter, who was the cause of his discomfort.

In the chapel the brethren began to sing,

Brother Pacificus could not hear them. The hour of midnight was near.

> Dies iræ, dies illa,
> Solvet sæclum in favilla,
> Teste David cum Sybilla."

Brother Pacificus waxed heavier in the strong arms of his " little brother; " his breathing grew slower, and more slow.

> Rex tremendæ majestatis,
> Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
> Salva me, fons pietatis.

Brother Pacificus shuddered once with a great shudder, and his breathing ceased; then he breathed once more, opened his eyes, and smiled.

" Jhesu! " he said, " Jhesu! Jhesu! Jhesu! " Then he laughed softly and gladly, as a lover at the sight of his beloved, or as an exile when he sees again the land he loves.

The hour was midnight; a light like moonlight flickering upon blue steel flashed through the room, and Brother Pacificus died.

Then as Brother Gorlois laid him down, and slowly rubbed his cramped arms, there flew through the casement a bunch of blue flowers; they smote him on the chest, and dropped upon the dead man's breast.

Brother Gorlois gave a cry that was like unto a human sob of pain, but liker still to the cry of an angry beast that has been hurt. He leaped through the unglazed casement; in the silent wood below there was the shriek of a woman in a swiftly stilled anguish of bodily fear.

From the chapel, when the day broke, the weeping brethren came. They found Brother Pacificus dead, and on his breast a bunch of blue sweet-smelling flowers; under the window on the dew-drenched forest turf, there lay a half-clad girl; a bunch of blossoms like those on the dead saint's breast was in her stiffened hand; there was a wound in her throat that an arm nerved by savage rage had given; in the tangle of her rough hair was the knife that had killed her. It was the Brother Gorlois' hunting knife; but he had fled, and the House of the Cold Strand knew him no more from the hour when the Son of Man was born in him, in the throes of a first "conviction of sin," the passing anguish of a first remorse.

THE EXCELLENT VERSATILITY OF THE MINOR POET

PETALS of wild cherry blossom were flying on a soft rush of wind that swept through the beech wood. Little bright sheathlets lay, brown and shining, at the feet of the smooth silver-green boles of the trees. The leaves, not yet rid of the silky soft fringes of their babyhood, fluttered like little flags, and glowed like green flame; they were not yet thick enough to hide the misty blue sky, laced with feathery cloudlets. Light seemed to flow from the little leaves—the light of life, the life of spring-time. The "Fire of God" was aflame in the wood world; a green mist of colour was aglow in the very air that pulsed between the beech-tree boles. In every dell the bracken sprang up straightly, uncurling its brown heads to spread abroad the branches of its later summer greenery. The first blue-bells were there too, covering the ground with tender blue mist, and filling the air with an ecstasy of perfume that smote the senses with the pain that attends the inexpressible and almost intangible; for the soul

of all joy, of all sweetness, whether of perfume, sight, or sound, is ever hidden away in the heart of things, whereof all that can be smelt, or seen, or heard, does but torment us with a deeper, eternally elusive longing.

On a bough a blue tit hung head downwards, and beneath the bough, half hidden in a crisp bed of last year's leaves, lay a child who watched the tit with half-shut eyes, and shook with a delight he did not understand, which was akin to pain. A queer, lonely, shy child, lying in a wood, trembling with a force which was trying to express itself through him. He was the motherless son of an old country vicar, who took scarcely any notice of him until the boy was old enough to read the books his father loved, who let the child "run wild" from sunrise to sunset, and after.

Those who commented on the matter said it was very bad for a boy to have no young companions, and to dream alone in a wood all day. This was true, but circumstances alter cases. The training, or rather the lack of any training from the world of men, happened to be just what this particular child needed; this was probably the reason he was placed where he was, to struggle

through a short life alone. People were as shadows to the boy—shadows whom he greeted kindly, to whom he meekly submitted himself in much, for he was docile in most matters, partly because there were so few things of the outer world for which this queer child really cared. When the outer things were forced upon his notice, he observed all manner of traits in people which others did not see. But for the most part he did not live in the world of men at all, but in the life of the beech wood, and in the life of that which the wood partly expressed—a life after which he reached continually without knowing or finding it.

He lay in the withered leaves and quivered with the thoughts and dim sensations that came about him like living presences; a power, not his own, seemed to press upon the child, till the wood vanished from his eyes; it was as though the wide sky had suddenly stooped to the boy and engulfed him in a flood of quivering, living light.

Vague longings, longings to express somewhat that lurked within and ever eluded him, compassed the child about; until at last the knowledge stole upon him that he could put a shadow of his thought into rhythmic words; words with

a cadence that should tell of brooks and whispering leaves, and the songs and rustling of the birds in the beech wood.

It was about this time that the father saw that his child was not as other children; when he saw it he gave the boy no less liberty, but he bestowed upon him freely such knowledge as was his, and let him learn from the poets of past and present the power that lies in deftly wielded words.

So this boy, Fletewode Garth, lived in the quiet old vicarage house, surrounded by the beech woods and the meadows, and dreamed, and wrote, and read such books as his father possessed, which were less numerous than well chosen. His father, the gentlest, simplest, most unworldly of men, never speculated as to his boy's future. Nor did the lad himself dream, as yet, of giving his thoughts to the world; of fame to be or money making he never thought at all.

The day came (it was when Fletewode was twenty years old) that the mild old vicar, having finished his appointed course as pastor of Beechenfield, sat down peacefully to smoke and doze under the shade of a trellised Crimson Rambler in the vicarage garden, and there he fell asleep and never

woke up again. Then it was found that save for the sum of £100 in the Bank, his son was left penniless; very well read in English literature, with much delicacy of taste in art and poetry, with such classical attainments as the old vicar had himself possessed, and with no other qualifications for making his way in the world—save genius. So that it is obvious he ran a very good chance of starving.

His father's cousin, a prosperous man of business, desired to do well by him. He offered to obtain for him a clerkship in the city. Fletewode thanked him; then he pointed out that he was very unbusinesslike, that arithmetic was not his strong point, in fact he was in the habit, when necessity arose, of adding up on his fingers; also that he wrote a very unclerkly hand. Moreover, he said: "I want to write about the things of which I think, and I believe that is the only thing I can really do well."

His relative regarded him as a fool, and did not take the trouble to hide the fact. Fletewode was quite unruffled by this, which annoyed his kinsman still more. There is nothing to be done with a person who does not mind what you think of, or say to, him, and it makes you appear as

though you were of little account in his eyes. Fletewode's relative was unpleasantly conscious of this, nevertheless he tried again to rouse the impracticable youth to a sense of realities; he asked him how he proposed to live. Fletewode replied that he possessed £100; he supposed he could live on that for some time; perhaps he should earn money by the things he wrote; he had not considered the matter deeply, and, after all, money was of secondary importance. To speak disrespectfully of other people's God's is unjustifiable; Fletewode's relative, very properly, cursed him in the names of Worldly Wisdom, and Business and Commonsense; also he said he washed his hands of him, when he was starving in the gutter he would come to his senses. Fletewode smiled like one who is occupied with more important questions, but lends a kindly ear to childlike babblings; then he went out to sit under the Crimson Rambler, where his father died. The crimson petals lay thickly on the walk, and in a crook of the thorny boughs a flycatcher was feeding a youthful family.

A week later Fletewode left the vicarage, and the roses, the beech wood and the birds, and went to London with a sheaf of manuscripts and a few

books. At the end of a year he had written a great deal, but no one heeded him. Who was to be expected to turn aside from the press of life to see whether this shabbily dressed young man, who couched all manner of wild, mystical thoughts of God and humanity and nature in melodious verse, that made one think of the murmur of the wind through a perfumed wood on a June night —who was to take much trouble, I say, to see whether there was any truth in the words, or genius in the soul, of such a country lad as this?

At the end of a year the £100 was nearly gone; not that Fletewode had recklessly spent the whole of this enormous sum on himself, but he found (it is not an unusual experience) many people in the not too magnificent street where he rented a room who were poorer than he; these people looked upon him as a man of fortune, and they explained to him the duty of the rich towards the poor.

On a day in spring Fletewode Garth sat in his room and shivered with nervousness and hunger, while he faced the fact that he had but three shillings left.

Soon he would not be able to buy ink and paper; his work was beginning to suffer a little

by reason of lack of food, and anxiety. It was for that reason the sheet of paper on the table before him was angrily torn across, and stained, moreover, with tears. He could not think; the halting of his brain, the blunting of his perceptions were the keenest tortures life could bring a soul like Fletewode Garth. He had altered during his year of town life; the child-look, which had lingered in his eyes despite his twenty years, was gone. He was no longer semi-unconscious of his surroundings and steeped in dreams of the things beyond. He was nervously, irritably, bitterly conscious of his world. Life—the seamy side of it—had made him look on the things men call the realities of existence; the ugliest, most sordid, most evil side of life. He had looked to some purpose, looked till his heart was sickened, till his heart was weary with pain and hopelessness. Looked till the pressure of the sordid-seeming struggle without, and the strong constraining power of that mystic something within, a power which was laid on him despite himself, sometimes strained his nerves to breaking point.

Now, too, a dread seized him. The sight of the world's sorrow had made him tremblingly anxious that his human comrades should hear him speak

of the fairer things; of that which he felt to be true, which once had been the whole of life for him. For the first time he desired to comfort and to succour, and though he knew it not, this longing gave to his work the last touch it needed—the human touch, the power of speech from heart to heart.

Suppose, he thought, he died of poverty, and all he had written was swept away unread. Fletewode actually believed that it is possible to sweep out of existence, irrevocably and for all time, a thing which the world needs, or will need. Therefore he grieved; he had no personal ambitions, he did not mind obscurity or death, nor did he greatly mind suffering; but now, at last, he wished people to have the happiness that had vanished from his own life.

He got up with a sigh, took his hat, and went out. He was going to seek a possible patron. John Chalmers, a man whom he once helped with some of the vanished £100, told him "to go and see Scottie; Scottie might put something in his way."

John Chalmers was a clever man, who would have been a successful artist, save for drink. He drew rather coarse cartoons for inferior comic papers.

" Scottie," on the other hand, was a prosperous person. He had a talent for inventing jingling refrains which " caught on " with the public; his comic songs, " patriotic " songs, and dance music were whistled by every street boy, and ground out by every piano organ in London.

Fletewode Garth reached the house of this prosperous man; it was a little house in the suburbs, with a lilac tree bursting into bloom in the small front garden. Mr. Scottie had lunched an hour before his visitor's arrival; but, being conscienceless in such matters, he lied and said he was famished, and luncheon was late. This he did because he knew Fletewode Garth was hungry; for, before he and the public had discovered his gift for tunes, he was a struggling provincial actor, stranded in South Wales by a decamping manager; wherefore he had tramped to the nearest large town, went forty-eight hours without food, and slept under a hayrick in a pelting thunderstorm; this invaluable experience caused him to feel for Fletewode, and also caused him to perceive the signs of famine, and shape his lie in accordance with his observations. Now if some persons had refrained from that lie, it would have indicated in them a high regard for truth;

but if Mr. Scottie had refrained from it, it would have argued lack of sympathy rather than morality; for he lied fairly often, and believed it to be necessary; therefore his untruthfulness to Fletewode was an act of unmixed virtue.

After luncheon he told his guest he wanted verses—up-to-date verses—to which he could attach tunes; his old friend Farquharson, who used to write them for him, was dead; would Fletewode try to fill his place. It was pure philanthropy on the part of this patron of poetry; he could get countless jingles of the kind he needed; but he was sorry for the lad, whose white face, hollow eyes, and air of nervous strain, had touched him.

Fletewode said he would try. He went home, and thought for a few minutes. Then he drew from his memory a quaint country tale from his old home; he cast it into the form of a ballad. It was stirring enough; a story of love and heroism, of those elemental passions of the race which are always young, always able to grip the imagination. The next day he took it to his patron, who shook his head.

"My dear chap," said he amiably, "*this* won't do. I want something which will go down at the

Rag Bag. Never been to the *Rag Bag?* Great Scott! How on earth can you write unless you know the world? I'll give you a pass. You go and see for yourself the kind of thing I want."

Fletewode went to the *Rag Bag;* at first the foolish vulgarity of the songs, the dull, sordid atmosphere of the place, wearied him. Then his mind, an ever-plastic machine, adapted itself a little; he began to take a sort of amused pleasure in learning the " trick of the thing." His cleverness began to prompt him; to show him how easily he could write rhymes much more pointed, much more witty, and considerably more harmful, than the majority of these coarse, imbecile jingles; his genius, which was the power beyond, held his mind back, and said: " Keep these powers holy for me."

Next day he went to see Scottie, and told him he did not care to do it.

" Why not? " said his patron, a little piqued.

" I don't care to wade in the gutter mud," said Fletewode irritably, and indeed, very rudely and ungratefully; but he was over-strung and tormented by various sections of his mental and emotional make-up pulling at him at once, and each in a different direction.

"What bosh," said the other. "Gutter mud! Gutter mud be hanged! The people *want* it. Old Farquharson was as decent a fellow as ever breathed. You think the poor old chap has gone below, I suppose, because he wrote these things to keep his missus and kids out of the workhouse? Well! Of all the beastly *cant*——"

"No, no, I don't mean that. It was all right for him."

"If you think you're a better fellow than old Farquharson was, my young friend, you're jolly well mistaken," said the other, strumming excruciatingly on the piano, for he was growing annoyed.

"I never said I was better. I never think, or care either, whether I am good, bad, or indifferent. Can't you see how hideously ugly these songs are? Jingling tunes and Bank Holiday verses! They're like the smell of withered cabbages and naphtha lamps."

This was not very courteous to the kindly composer of the said tunes.

"Oh, well," said he, rather sharply, "as you please. Er—I'm rather busy, Mr. Garth."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Fletewode, starting and colouring. "I'm afraid I've been

very rude. I'm sorry. Good morning, and—thank you."

That evening he sat alone as usual, and tried to write his thoughts. He was cold and tired and half-starved. There was only a shilling left. He had written a sonnet, perhaps one of the most difficult forms of poetry, needing the greatest perfection of execution. He read it, sitting near the window, where a streak of the dying sunlight could fall on his numbed frame. The lines halted, they did not even scan; the thoughts were feeble, confused. His work was bad; it was fatally, irredeemably bad. He crushed the paper in his hands, fell on his knees on the floor, and rested his head on the seat of his one wooden chair. There are some agonies of the soul into which it is sacrilege to pry; this was one of them; we will not try to gauge it.

At last Fletewode stood up, went out, spent his last shilling on a meal, and came back penniless. That was no matter, to-morrow Scottie would give him five, perhaps ten shillings.

He sat at the table and wrote; as he wrote he became absorbed in his work, he found himself laughing over it. When it was finished he read it through, he dropped it on the table, rested his

head upon it and cried like a child. He had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and his life died within him for very shame. The dawn found him asleep in his chair, his head still resting upon the paper.

The next day he sought his patron, apologised for his folly, was easily forgiven by the most placable and kindly of slip-knot-principled men, and tendered his verses. The amiable Scottie took them, read, and chuckled over them appreciatively.

"You jolly humbug!" he said with genuine admiration. "And you got a pass for the *Rag Bag* out of me to give you a tip!"

"Will they do—these verses?"

"Rather," still chuckling. "I'll give you ten shillings for them—yes—I don't mind giving you ten shillings. They're very smart. *This* is your real line, you see; you'll get on now like a house on fire."

"Give them to me. I'll polish them. They're in the rough. I wrote them quickly."

"They'll do."

"Give them back, I tell you," said Fletewode irritably. "They might have been raked out of the Thames mud; but, even so, I won't let them

go like that. I'll polish them. You shall have them to-morrow."

Scottie handed him the verses and a ten-shilling piece. Fletewode went home to "polish" his production.

He spread the verses out before him. From his window he could see stacks of chimney pots, their crudeness of colour mellowed by the picturesqueness of dirt lit by the benign influence of May sunshine. Through the open window floated the fluty call of a caged thrush, whose cage hung over a great heap of wallflowers on the stall of a greengrocer's shop.

Fletewode listened awhile, picked up the verses, dropped them, half raised his hands to his head, let them fall, and sat still. His limbs grew numb and heavy, then they vanished from his consciousness; all his life seemed to be focussed to one point, with a great eagerness and yearning, for what he knew not.

The room faded from his sight. Petals of wild cherry blossom, like faery cups fashioned from snowflakes, were flying through the air; the green of the beeches was like living flame; the wood was full of keen strong life. The birds were building; a wren flew by with thistledown in her beak;

down by the little stream where marsh marigolds and water forget-me-nots grew, a kingfisher was flashing by; a blackbird was splashing and bathing in the shallows; over the cowslip-spangled meadow beyond, the rooks were flying, and the sheep bells' clang blended with their sober calling.

But there was a keener, swifter life in the wood than that of opening leaf and building bird. He had always felt its throbbing, but now it waxed perceptible to sight; it flowed like living light through the boles of the trees; they seemed to grow translucent; it thrilled in the air; through the shining vistas of the beechen woods, the gods and dryads of old legends came trooping; and the elfin peoples of the flowers and air, of the water and the moss-decked rock, made good sport in the flitting lights and shadows.

He cast himself, so it seemed, in the old hollow filled with the dead crisp beech leaves; their faint pungent smell and the delicate odour of the opening leaves were all about him in this strange old-new world. About him a presence wove itself; an unreal, most-real, compelling power, without him and within. He felt the pulsing of a stronger life smite upon his. And then, even as when he was a child, the inner and the outer world alike

flowed away from him, the great sky seemed to stoop to him in a blinding flood of living light and wrap him round, and "there was neither speech nor language," only light—light—light—and again more light and keener life.

. . . . . .

The next day Mr. Scottie received a note which was left at his door. Out of it dropped a ten-shilling piece. On a sheet of paper was written:

"I can't do it, I've torn them up. To every man his work and his line, this isn't mine. I must do the work they mean me to do. If you say: 'Who are they?' I do not know. If through some fault of mine, or of the world's, I fail to do as I am meant to do, then let me go. There's no point in a man's keeping his body alive by making his brain grind out work for which it wasn't built. Better work with one's hands than that, till the hour strikes. That is what I shall try now, and wait results."

Mr. Scottie was greatly concerned, because his *protégé* had, as he phrased it, "gone dotty," and, being as kindly a creature as ever pursued the tasks appointed for him by his past, he took pains to find Fletewode. But Fletewode and his MSS. were gone.

A week later the gardener of a well-to-do literary man, a minor poet, received a shock. Within his master's grounds was a little clump of beech trees; they grew far away from Fletewode's old home, but they were fine trees, all bravely decked in their spring green, and at their feet grew bluebells. The gardener found a dead man lying face downwards in a bluebell patch, and beside him was a great bundle of papers tied up in a scarlet and white handkerchief. The gardener gave the alarm; he carried the bundle to his master, and the dead man was laid in the harness room in the stables. There was no clue at all as to the identity of the man; the doctor discovered he had died of heart failure. The minor poet looked through the papers; he said at the inquest there was no clue in the bundle as to who the man was, there were only a few unimportant documents; he would pay the expenses of the poor young fellow's funeral.

Now the minor poet was an ambitious man, well known in the literary world. His ambitions were larger than his power of performance. He was well known among men of letters as a very good critic of other people's work. The day of the funeral he sat alone and trembled in the

throes of temptation. He did not understand the subtle mystic thought of the poems in the bundle, but he saw their marvellous beauty of expression. He appreciated keenly the lovely lilt and melody of the lines which seemed to ring out from the heart of a fairy haunted wood. The minor poet was not a very righteous man. Three beautiful little books emanated from his pen point, they were finally bound in white vellum and tied chastely with blue ribbons. Those books were widely read. The critics greatly praised the versatility of the minor poet, who had never written anything of that kind before; also they warned him—friendly-wise—against a tendency to mysticism, which ever saps the judgment and emasculates the intellect. The minor poet said he would never fall again into that snare, and indeed he never did so. The thoughts enshrined within those poems struck strongly on the consciousness of four readers only. One was a foreign writer of romance, the second was a great preacher, the third a musician, and the fourth a man of science to whom the world harkened when he spake. And the thought of these four men, and through them the thought of the world, was coloured for all time to come by the work of the

minor poet; men who had not heeded that of Fletewode Garth, heard his voice gladly. Thus the wheel that none can stay rolled on, and the world, through the heart failure of Fletewode, and the ambition of an unrighteous man, received the message which it would not receive by other means. For the hour had struck upon the clock of time when it was fit that it should hear, therefore its ears were opened.

But the problem for the wise is this: When sheaves are garnered what shall be the minor poet's share in the reaping?

"THE TREE OF BEAUTY"

"THAT," said the playwright, "is a beautiful story. I suppose every one who reads it will think so; but I am not sure that more than one in a million will guess a tithe of what it means. Frankly, I know I don't. I daresay even the writer himself didn't know all that it suggests."

The book was *The Light Invisible*, and the story was "Consolatrix Afflictorum."

"Do you agree with me?" said the playwright after a pause, in which the only sound heard was the wind and the drumming of the waves on the rocks. Since he received no answer he looked at his companion, a man whom he believed he knew very well; when he looked at him he knew his own folly, and was silent.

Presently the man said:

"Do you like stories? Shall I tell you one?"

"Is it true?"

"Naturally. How could it be otherwise? Do you think I can create out of nothingness? The story in itself must be true, if I could understand

it. But I shall have to grope after it, and translate it for you; and I shall do it badly, no doubt. Still—shall I tell it? "

" Do," said the playwright. Whereupon the man began as follows:

" Years ago, perhaps a couple of centuries or so, there was a village in the north of England, which remains little altered to this day. It has never been touched by that change in the method of viewing truth which some call the Reformation, and others name after a different fashion. This was partly because it is an isolated moorland village; partly because it was, and is, owned by a family whose representative at that time was not only a very rich and influential man, but also of the type with whom other men, and even Church and State, do not very readily interfere. He was grave and discreet, sober of speech and very devout, and he ruled his village with a most benevolent despotism. He was especially filled with devotion for the Virgin Mother, " the blossoming Tree, the Mother of Christ," in whose honour he had built a small but most beautiful chapel in his grounds; here the rites celebrated were of the highest perfection of reverent elabora-

tion, and here the devout builder retired daily for prayer and meditation.

" One day as he came from prayer his servants brought him a vagabond gipsy lad who had been selling songs in the village or offering them in exchange for food. This outcast was very little past his boyhood; his garments were worn, and faded with sun and rain, his feet were bare, and in his cap was fastened a bough stolen from a blossoming fruit tree.

" At that time the once persecuted had become the persecutors; coarse, bitter, and profane songs were written, and sold to be sung in taverns and at country fairs, which mocked at things which were by many people justly held sacred. Among this stroller's songs were two which spoke profanely of Her whom the king of the little moorland village reverenced. When therefore he read them he became very angry; he bade that the songs—one and all—should be destroyed; he told his servants that the gipsy should be whipped, set in the stocks, and finally pelted from the place after being ducked in the pond which was on the village green. Then the lad begged for mercy; he pleaded that he could not read, that he knew no difference between faith and faith, but only

the crafts of the wood and the lore of his people. He bought and sold in ignorance, partly because he must eat, but chiefly because he wished to buy a string of red beads for his sweetheart, which he had promised her, because she desired to hang them round her throat.

" But the devout man, being wounded by the insults to his faith, for the verses were both coarse and flippant, would not listen. The lad was punished; his songs were destroyed; and at the time of sunset he fled, followed by the hoots of the villagers, bruised, bleeding, breathless, and half drowned.

" Now a year later his judge was riding, at nightfall, through a strange district of the south, whither he had come on business. He met a sober man in the dress of a preacher, and rode with him because the hour was late and the roads dangerous because of highwaymen. After a while they began to talk of grave matters touching their faith, and the salvation of their souls. Thus it happened that very soon they quarrelled, and well nigh came to reviling each other, in speech as well as in thought, the one for a blasphemous idolater, the other for a vile heretical outcast from the faith. At last they found that, in the

heat of argument, they had missed the way, and were on a swampy bridle path in the depths of a misty oak wood.

" Then they called a truce, and reflected what they should do; as they considered thus they heard one coming through the wood who whistled. Soon he drew near; it was a young man, little more than a boy; as he came nearer he began to hoot like an owl, and the owls in the wood called back to him. When he was quite near and saw the faces of the riders he seemed as though he would fly; then he pulled his cap from his head, and came towards them, pleading that he was doing no ill. The ruler of the northern village saw he was the lad whom he had caused to be punished. He saw, moreover, that the gipsy knew him; therefore he told him very sternly that if, in revenge for a well-merited punishment, he played them evil tricks and directed them wrongly he should most bitterly repent it. But when the gipsy raised his eyes to his and asked simply:

" ' Why should I lie to you, sir, about the way? ' he felt ashamed and was silent. Then the preacher asked if there was any house at hand where they might purchase food and lodging. The gipsy answered:

" ' Good gentlemen, there is a farm a mile hence where this morning the farmer set his dog at me, thinking I would rob his hen-roost; when the dog did not bite me he kicked him. But he will gladly receive two worthy gentlemen with purses. Shall I guide you? '

" ' Guide us,' said the preacher, ' and we will pay you.' So the boy went before them whistling. He was a wonderful whistler, and he seemed to have bat's eyes that could see in the dark.

" Presently the man who had so severely condemned him called to him.

" ' Come here,' he said, ' and walk at my horse's head.'

" The boy came obediently; at first he was afraid and loth to speak, but he seemed to be shy rather than sullen, and after a while he talked fearlessly and simply of such things as he knew; of the lore of his race, and of the customs of the peoples of the wood, sometimes called dumb brutes by those who cannot speak their tongue. His simplicity and gentleness, and his forgetfulness of the harshness of his former judge, won upon the man. He felt remorse, and asked him what he had done when his songs were destroyed, ' For I might,' said he, ' have left those to you

in which I found no offence.' The gipsy answered simply that he went hungry for three days; also his sweetheart followed another because he could not give her the beads he had promised her. There were tears in his eyes as he spoke and yet he laughed.

" They went on for a while in silence; at last the lad stopped, and said:

" ' Gentlemen, I am sorry. The wood is very strange to-night, and I have missed my way. I meant to lead you right. Do not think evil of me. I know now that you who are not of our race quarrel among yourselves. But in this you agree. To curse us who are not of any faith, and to believe evil of us because we live under the sky and have other ways and thoughts than yours. But—but I am very tired of being cursed.'

" ' You shall not be cursed by me,' said the man by whose side he walked. ' Nor will I believe you wilfully led us wrong.'

" Then the gipsy took courage; he listened a little while, and cried:

" ' I hear the crackle of a camp fire. Perhaps some of my people are hereabouts. If so, do not fear us; we will welcome you if you trust us, and give you what we have to share.'

" The others heard nothing, but the lad led them towards the sound his ears caught, and soon they saw he was right. They came to an open space in the wood; there was a circle of huge grey stones, a temple of the gods of a vanished faith; within the circle was turf, where rabbits leaped and ate; in the centre a pool twenty feet deep, crystal clear, and green as pale chrysolite; had it been day each tiny weed that grew in the depth, each little stone that lay there, would have shone clear. In the centre of the pool was an islet, and on the isle a little ruined chapel dedicated to the Mother of God; in the chapel was a gipsy fire streaming upwards towards the great starlit sky, and causing wondrous shadows to leap and chase on the ruined walls. A thin slab of rock rose from the depths of the pool to the surface of the water, so that there was a narrow perilous pathway from the shore to the isle. In the chapel by the fire there sat on the broken pavement a young barefooted woman, clad in a peasant dress of blue frieze, a cloak about her shoulders, her hair falling veilwise around her, and a young child sleeping in her arms. The boy called to her in Romany; she rose and came to the shore of the isle, her child

in her arms, and answered him in the same tongue. She was a beautiful brown-haired young woman; her solemn eyes were grey, and as clear as the pool by which she stood.

" ' Bid her speak in a tongue we can understand,' said the preacher.

" The boy did so; asking whether she could direct them.

" ' I could, little brother,' she answered in a sweet voice. ' But you and these gentlemen might not understand me well. Better to shelter by these stones to-night, or cross the water to my fire; to-morrow you may seek your own way.'

" ' Have you any food, mother,' said the lad, ' food fit to offer such worshipful gentlemen? '

" ' Scarcely is it fit, brother,' said the gipsy woman. ' I have here bread, and a little wine, and one cup only in which to serve it.'

" ' If I had known you camped here, sister,' said the boy, ' and if you had no man to see that all is well with you and the child, I could have set snares in the fern, and you would have supped better.'

" ' I know it,' she answered. ' Had I asked it of you, you would have set snares for these little children. Nay, then, brother, you would have

shared all you trapped till you went supperless yourself. Therefore you shall eat of my bread and drink the wine I have to give. Cross the water to me.'

" ' But these good gentlemen, mother? ' asked the boy.

" ' They may take you by the hand,' she said, ' and cross the water to me.'

" ' I do not think they can tread a path so narrow as this rock. It is slippery. Sister, I will cross and bring to them what you have of food and drink, and fire that we may build a fire by the stone.'

" ' You may take them fire,' she answered, ' but for food and drink they must cross to me. They cannot walk with your feet; they must use their own. They must cross barefoot, or they will fall into the pool.'

" After a while the man who ruled this little northern village determined to cross; he was hungry, and preferred the scantiest fare to fasting; besides he saw the cross on the ruined altar, and he desired to enter the chapel and pray. The preacher demurred at the depth of the cold still water; the chapel was a former place of Popish worship, the cross on the altar offended

him, and he was not yet very hungry, besides he had a little food still in his wallet. He tethered the horses and sat down to eat, while his two companions crept, hand in hand, inch by inch over the narrow rock path that was just visible above the shifting shimmer of the pool's surface.

" Entering the chapel they sat side by side on the broken pavement. The woman, sitting beside the fire, broke her cakes of bread; she gave them each a portion, and ate some herself; she drank from the cup and handed it to them.

" ' Till the sun rises,' she said, ' I shall rest here, I and my child. Rest you here, also, and sleep or watch as you will. Through the night my fire will burn; at dawn I shall let it die. It will have lighted and warmed us till the sun shall rise.'

" The preacher, having prayed, wrapped himself in his cloak, and sat at the foot of a great stone, watching the horses as they cropped the turf, lest they should stray and be lost; he mused profitably and seriously on his labours and doctrine. He heard the cropping of the horses, the murmur of the wind, and the trickle of a stream, fed by the deep still pool. He heard the woman singing softly to her child, in crooning snatches, in seeming unmindfulness of what she sang:

" ' He that is down need fear no fall,' she crooned. ' He that is low no pride——'

" She whispered wordless music as she rocked to and fro; then her song changed:

" ' O Tree of Beauty—Tree of Might,' she sang, clear, faint, and high, in a monotonous chant, such as the chapel must have echoed to in the days when priests served before its ruined altar, and men and women knelt at the little shrine above which was the statue of a Mother and Child, ' O Tree of Beauty—Tree of Beauty—Tree of Might——'

" The gipsy boy lay near the fire rejoicing in the warmth, looking sometimes up to the star-lit sky, across which many a meteor flamed and died, sometimes at the shadows that leaped on the walls, sometimes into the woman's face.

" ' What do you sing, sister? ' he said. ' It is not a song of our people.'

" ' It is a song of all peoples, brother,' she answered. ' But they sing it in many tongues, and to many tunes.'

" The lad looked at her wonderingly; then he began to watch the stars again, and the little thin clouds that flew across the dark sky. At last he went to sleep with his head resting on his arm;

sometimes he laughed and whispered as he slept, and thrice he sobbed. The woman bent down and cast over him a fold of her cloak, as he lay and dreamed under the stars.

" As for the third traveller, he, mindful of the sacredness of the place, stood not alone barefooted (for to cross the rock it had been needful to lay aside all covering of his feet), but also bareheaded he turned his face to the East, and perceiving the little side altar with the statue of the Mother, he approached and knelt before it, making the sign of the cross. There he knelt till dawn, for he was one used to prayer and vigil. The woman sat motionless, guarding the leaping flames; bread in her hands, the wine cup at her feet, her cloak enfolding the sleeping outcast, the swaddled babe on her knees. Now of her thoughts, which were measureless, there is no record I can read; nor can I tell of the gipsy boy's dreams. But it is said the other two wanderers saw the place in very different fashion, and this is what they saw. The preacher beheld the dark circle of the enclosing oak trees, stirred by the wind; he saw the great grey stones reared by the dead pagans; he saw the turf, the horses, and the wild rabbits; he saw the pool shining in the firelight, the ruined

chapel, the leaping flame, and the woman sitting beside it with her child on her knee, and the sleeping lad lying at her feet. And his eyes rested on her till he forgot the strife of creeds; he watched till she seemed to him the image or forthshowing of the motherhood of the world; and when next he preached he spoke no harsh doctrine, nor railed at idolatrous worship of a creature rather than of the Creator, as he was wont to do; but he spoke of the Love of God shown forth in human love, and above all in the great love of a mother for her little children; for this pure love, said he, is an example to us of the love that gives rather than takes, it is a symbol of the Divine Love, that, motherlike, feeds, sustains, and preserves all creatures.

" Now the other traveller passed into profound musing, till his outer senses were locked as though in sleep; and he saw the place in which he was after the following manner and semblance. He saw the girdle of trees as the wall of a great temple, therein there were three courts, and at the centre a shrine. In the first court was the image of a woman bearing a child in her arms; about her were lights burning and the smell of incense, and the song of human praise; priests

in rich vestments celebrated solemn rites, and worshippers, both male and female, old and young, bowed down before this mother and child. In the second court there was a dimness as of a starlit night; there was no incense save the smell of earth and flowers, no song but the song of birds, and of streams, and the boom of waves like the tones of an organ; no lights but strange fires that gleamed and flickered through the night, no worshippers save dim forms of the gracious ' hidden peoples,' the gods of wood and orchard, plain and tilth.

" In the third court was a turmoil of cold flame; those who served and worshipped there (if servitors and worshippers there were), were many-hued, transparent, flame-like; here was no human being—neither was there male nor female, but in that turmoil of fires were strange forms moving in time to music, and wonderful shapes that changed and gleamed and moved in marvellous sort with a motion and rhythm that had therein nothing earthly whereof tongue can rightly speak or pen set down; but throughout the turmoil of this wondrous dance there was an order and a purpose, for they moved in time to a great song that seemed like silence.

"But in the Shrine there was nothing visible; only from it a voice was heard crying:

"'She who is worshipped in this temple is the Mother of all Faiths, past and present. She is worshipped as the Divine Mother of the Worlds, as the Power of Wisdom, as the Secret Rose, as star-strewn space, as Mary the Virgin, Mother of God; as the deep waters of the sea, also; and some there be who think of Her as woman. She is the Form Divine, Memory and Time; She is angel and man, woman and child, beast and bird, sky and cloud and flower, song of bird, dew, sunshine and rain, wind and water, snow and frost, tree and stream, priests' chant and sacred writ, learning and holy rites. She is the Sacred Mirror of God, in Whom are all things visible and invisible. They who toil in Her service worship and praise Her, and of Her the Holy Child is born in every human heart. She, the sacred cup, and the holy bread; She, the lily of flame set in the waters of space; She, the waters whence it springs; She, the hearts of men, and their souls and bodies; She, the Holy Cave, the consecrated Manger wherein the Babe is cradled; She is the Mother of the Sacred Humanity whereby we enter the mystery of the

Godhead. She, then is Nature and Beauty, the Power of God, the Builder of all Forms, the Mother of all Tales. Those sing of Her and praise Her who love to worship God as Divine Form rather than as hidden all-sustaining Life. For He, though he be One, is likewise manifold; and those who adore Him in the many praise Him in the sacred Form, eternal in the heavens when all earthly forms have passed like spray driven by the wind; Mary the Ever-Virgin, the Root of all the worlds, one with the life that sustains them, eternally inseparate from It. She is the Temple of God, the glorified body of the saint, the celestial garden of the souls made one; She is the Sacred Wood of the Cross, the Tree of Might and Beauty——"

. . . . . .

The man who told this tale ceased to speak. He was silent till the playwright touched his arm; he started:

" Is that the end? " said the playwright.

" It is the end," said the man, dreamily. " There is nothing more to tell."

FORTY-EIGHT HOURS

We are in Thee who art strength:
Give us Thy strength!
We are in Thee who art love:
Give us Thy love!
We are in Thee who art power:
Give us Thy power!
We are in Thee who art peace:
Give, Lord, Thy peace!
We are in Thee who dost wait:
Teach us to wait!

Litany of the Wood.

THERE were three men in the large square, solidly furnished room. Two of them were talking; the third was silent. It was a comfortable room—a library well filled with books. The men who talked were the host and his guest; he who was silent was the secretary, who wrote in the large bow window looking on the terrace, where sparrows quarrelled in the ivy, and the daffodils and nancies nodded in the soft blustering wind of late spring.

The secretary was a pale, shrewd-faced young man of twenty-eight; he was of middle height, not plain, nor yet comely, except for his eyes, which were very clear and quiet, and of a striking

yellowish-grey. He was unobtrusively dressed, and very impassive, not to say dull, in manner. He was civil, however, attentive when he was spoken to; his voice was pleasant, and rather conciliatory in tone, as though he was deprecating anger.

He was writing letters in a small, neat hand, and showed no sign of hearing any conversation that was not addressed to him.

His employer was talking; he was a good talker, and a good lecturer. He was a very public-spirited person full of affairs and had just written a certain world-compelling pamphlet, which was intended to revolutionise thought in various unexpected quarters. He was a very well-known, much-applauded, and generally respected person.

He was talking to a guest who was less applauded because he was held to be soberly commonplace; nevertheless he too was generally respected, for he did nothing in particular, whether of good or evil, and was known to be very rich and growing richer.

He listened to his host, but an observant person would have noticed that he often glanced at the secretary.

When the host proposed a stroll before luncheon

he rose; he was silent till they were on the terrace, then he said carelessly:

"That man of yours, Dexter, is a steady-looking fellow."

"O yes; he's steady and shrewd too. I believe him to be a good fellow in the main. Not quite reliable—as regards money matters some years ago. However, he was young, and he paid the penalty. I gave him a fresh start, and I've never repented it. I think bygones should be bygones."

"Quite so," said the guest.

The host had a "carrying voice"; it "carried" into the room where the secretary sat.

He had finished the letters; he was sorting and arranging the MS. of the world-compelling pamphlet, before proceeding to type it. The writer was a religiously-disposed man and a church-goer; he liked to preface his pamphlets with a motto, generally a text. This one was a text; it ran: "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you."

He was an excellent man; but he never stopped to think whether he was in the habit of making a catalogue of his past offences to his listening friends and new acquaintances or whether he would like to know that they did so on his behalf.

Forty-eight Hours

There was once a converted heathen who was much cleverer than those who converted him. He told the bishop of the diocese that he and his fellow-converts were in the habit of gathering together to make public confession of their sins.

"An excellent discipline, doubtless," said the good bishop, "but such public confession must be painful."

"By no means," said the simple penitent. "Because we do not confess our own sins, but each others'."

The bishop mused on the childlike simplicity of the convert; but—was the former heathen as guileless as he sounded?

The secretary heard the words of his employer; his hands began to shake. Presently he dropped the MS. and sat staring out of the window. It was seven years since he had "paid the penalty," seven solid years of dull drudgery and loneliness, and they were still discussing it, and his "fresh start."

He sighed; picked up his pencil (he was numbering chaotic scraps of a very badly written MS.), let it slide to the carpet, rested his arms on the table, and his head on his arms, and sighed, and sighed, and sighed again; a sigh sadder than

a sob, because it spoke of a greater weariness, and a more utter depression and spiritlessness.

The door opened; the guest appeared; he shut the door quietly and stood looking at the secretary. At last he said softly:

"Dexter."

The man started and sprang up; his eyes looked nervous and ashamed.

"That's all right," said the other. "I only want to tell you what I've been leading up to for days. You knew I'd been leading up to something."

"I thought you were. I don't know what it is."

"I should not have come in here when I was supposed to be writing letters and talked to you, unless I had been trying to size you up. I shouldn't size you up unless I wanted you for something."

"Want me! For what?"

"I'll tell you."

The guest sat in the bow window and began to talk in a low voice. It does not matter specially what he said: it was a plan of action which a man of fair repute could only have told to one whose reputation for honesty was smirched. It was a very creditable scheme from the point of

view of a skilful speculator and financier who was not particular about his methods.

"My name must never appear," he said, "though of course I am the backer of the concern. If you will run the thing for me as your own, you understand, then—I will make it worth your while. I don't mind, to speak quite frankly, broaching the matter to you, because my reputation stands high, and I can back it with a big cheque. If you were to say I had spoken to you thus, you would not be believed if I denied it. You would be thought a blackmailer, that's all."

"I suppose so. I'm not likely to tell any one. I don't talk much; and I should only get into fresh trouble if I talked of this."

"Yes. You're quiet and shrewd. I've watched you a long time. Your life here is a dog's life. You are ticketed as the man—who was found out. Now there's very little risk in this; practically none. For if the thing fails I don't think the law can touch you. Of course your reputation would be gone; but then you've damaged that already, and he doesn't forget it, any more than you do, does he?"

"Naturally he does not."

"If it succeeds, and I think it will, then I will

give you enough of the proceeds to give you a real "fresh start" in America. My name will never appear; it will never be traced who paid you the money; you will simply reserve a sum agreed on between us. That's tempting to you, isn't it? It means freedom, and a clean record in another country. That's tempting?"

"I think so. Will you give me twenty-four hours to think it over?"

"As long as you like in moderation."

"It's only that I feel rather played out and tired, that's all. I funk at anything that is fresh; anything that needs thought and smartness."

"Ask for a holiday; rest and think it over."

So the man asked for a holiday, and was granted forty-eight hours; not more, because there was haste to produce the world-compelling pamphlet. He thought he would walk five miles to the forest, and live two days and nights in solitude under the open sky. He started in the dark, with a knapsack strapped to his shoulders. It was dawn when he reached the forest, and crossed a stretch of heath, whence the sea could be smelt, salt and pungent; and the island, too, could be seen, lying, indigo-blue, in the clear distance.

Forty-eight Hours

It was a very clear dawn, as clear as crystal, and sights and sounds and smells had a bell-like clean-cut purity that struck the soul at first hand, so that one hardly realised the perception of them came by way of the body. There was a winding ribbon-like road, which crossed the heath after it crept out of the thick forest, and along it a red-painted mailcart went. Behind the cart ran an old dog, lured neither to the right nor to the left in his steady following. The cart clattered over a railless wooden bridge which crossed a slow stream in which watergrasses waved; there were two moor-fowl swimming on it, and its banks were shining with water forget-me-nots.

He passed the mailcart and crossed the bridge; then he reached the woods and left the road. He wanted a quiet place in which to think; he had brought with him, in his knapsack, bread and cheese and apples,—enough food for two days. He walked down a turf path, climbed a gate, walked through two straight pine avenues, and gained the "open forest," a great silent glade solemn and wonderful in the breathless waiting of dawn. Here companies of rabbits were feeding; here were huge spring-flushed oaks, twisted thorns, delicate birches glowing

with the marvel of young leafage. Here too was gorse ablaze with the fire of God, and on the topmost twig of a larch, outlined against the sky, was a thrush, a-quiver with a passion of song, telling a marvellous secret of the heart of things, as only those can tell who do not understand the uttermost meaning of their speech.

He had walked through the place looking at nothing until now; he had an important decision to make. But now he stopped as though a great hand had gripped him, and he stared at the bird with his eyes half-shut. It was so clear; he could see the little feathers a-tremble at its quivering throat, as the notes bubbled up like drops of bright water from a well of joy.

He stared and listened till the thrush flew away.

He came to a little grove of holly trees; and there, on the round circle of oozing wood where a great apple tree had been felled, he lay down and ate some bread and an apple. Then he went to sleep, and when he woke it was noon; the glade was a marvel of dappled shade and shine.

There was a blue tit swinging on the holly bough above him; and a fox was trotting demurely through the fern a few yards away. It was all sacredly, wonderfully still. The place taught

nothing; said nothing; it was itself — it was what it was. That was all.

He heard a quick patter of rain; and the leaves shone with diamonds; he watched them a-glitter in the sun, when it shone forth again. A drove of shaggy cream-coloured cattle came by, crashing through the tangle, and passing the little grove of hollies, all a-shine in the sun, where he lay.

When they passed he rose and wandered down a turf alley till the pines hid the wide stretch of the open forest; then he lay with his face hidden on the great cushions of the moss; and listened half-unconsciously to the silence—the wonderful sounding silence—of the wood.

There was a big beech tree near; it blazed with the green fire of spring; at its foot were the shining sticky brown sheaths that once shielded the young leaves. The oaks were pink, they were as rosy as the dawn sky when he reached the forest. From the wood—only he was too tired to rise and seek them—he could smell some late primroses yet lingering on the sweet wet earth, from which the young grass sprang. He heard a wood-pigeon's slow, sleepy note a-purr from a little grove of larches. Presently, with a strong beat of blue-grey wings the bird flew between

him and the sky. Then a jay swung silently from the pines and perched on a bough above him; the conscienceless bird chuckled and preened his feathers; a tiny blue black-barred wonder fluttered down on the man's chest.

Lying so, he could see the stiff, straight stems of the uncurling bracken, quite differently from the fashion in which they are seen when they are looked at from above; they stood rank by rank, straight, stiff, and green, with their little brown cowled heads bent like monks in prayer.

There was a much bigger life than his unfolding its affairs there in the wood; and it made no turmoil or fuss about it; it lived and reasoned not; it kept the commandments because it was not aware they were apart from itself. And what were the commandments of the wood? Certainly they were kept, whatever they were, for the place was full of beauty and of rest.

The shadows grew long; it was time to eat some bread and cheese; he ate some, and drank from a little stream. It struck him he had not been thinking of the things he came there to think about; but after all he should probably accept the offer, and he was very tired. He had not realised before how much he was over-worked.

To-morrow he would think. In the meantime he would walk through the darkening pine avenue, and see the dusk, like a purple-robed giant, stalk over the land.

He walked on and on; the pine walks were unending. Each walk was cut and crossed by another vista of mystery; and always there was some hint of wonders veiling unseen marvels. Sometimes a milky-white bush of blackthorn; sometimes a little stream; sometimes a circle of great dead oaks like frosted silver, all ringed about by frost-bleached grass, through which the new green blades were pushing, and walled by dark pines touched by the little sticky buds of spring growth. Sometimes there was a pool of water shimmering in the shadow of the trees, set about with rose-pink blossoming bog-myrtle, and white bog-cotton, and wonderful little flat leaves shining like emeralds.

But at last he reached the gate. Beyond the gate was a stretch of green heather; and thereon forest ponies feeding, and cows with sleepily tolling bells. On it, too, great raised mounds; bracken and heather-clothed barrows where rabbits burrowed in the grave of some long-dead fighter. To the right was a curved line of woods

that seemed to be made of dusky red and green jewels. Before him was the island glowing like sapphire; in the foreground on the open barren heath was a little dark wind-twisted pine clear-cut against the sky; and the sky ablaze with the colour that is the parting blessing of the Lord of Light.

It was a pale sky of dream-blue; in the west it shone with crimson and orange flame, fading into green like a breath of some secret mystery of tenderness, and pinks like a dream of the love of God; and a violet so faint, pure, and holy that the heart quivered at the sight of it. Colour that speaks the tongue of the gods when thought falls dead and the sound of speech is mere hollowness.

When the colour faded big purple clouds began to drift up over the pale yellow sky until it was all a wonderful thick purple-blue darkness in which sounds were both clear and muffled; far-away sounds were clear, and sounds close at hand were muffled and eerie; pale milk-grey lights began to slide through the darkness.

There were no stars; only the warm, dark, sweet-smelling half-silence. He could not see a yard before his face, and yet he felt the darkness was a big, far-reaching space about him.

There was a dry ditch among the pines; it

was full of yellow-brown pine-needles. He lay down there and heard the noises of the night; the snapping of twigs, the rustle of little night-prowling beasts. Once a badger stole by; once a night-bird shrieked; the owls called hoo-hoo in the branches. Once there echoed a cry of pain and fear through the wood, the death-shriek of some tiny citizen. Once a night-jar purred in the tree above his head; and once the magic of the nightingale trembled through the warm dark air in a limpid river of sound.

At last he slept; and he woke to a wild rush of rain. The wood was full of a pale cool light; the pine-needles dripped; he heard the gurgle of a hurry of water in the ditch beyond the gate. He got up; the livid greenish-purple clouds were rushing across the sky; the island was veiled in a white mist of rain; the forest ponies galloped for some scant shelter; some of the herd turned disconsolate noses from the rush of waters; some squealed and kicked and bit at each other; others endured in meekness. A big ants' nest near the gate was flooded; pools stood in the heather; and a heap of cream-white foam swirled on the brown water in the ditch.

Light wisps of cloud fled across the background

of livid green-purple. He stood under shelter of the trees and watched the storm.

It passed; the clouds flew seawards; the sky grew a pale even grey; then a cool, soft wind began to blow. The east grew faint pink, then yellow-grey; then a long line of light quivered over the heather. The new day had come. The birds were stirring and singing; the rabbits hopped out to feed; a stoat darted across the track; and the clang of a cow-bell echoed across the moor.

He found the slowly moving stream he crossed yesterday; there he bathed; then he ate some of the food he had brought with him. Finally he walked down a path of silver-grey sand, skirting a wood of oaks.

It waxed very warm and still; there were no clouds; the air shimmered over the heather; white and little brown butterflies skipped over it; the island was veiled in a soft white haze with violet shadows in it. Snakes slid out into the open to sun themselves; the air was full of slanting gleams of gossamer and little drifting lives of insects that lived a day and never knew the night.

He sat among the pines and saw the brown lizards and the squirrels and watched the golden lights flit over the dry pine-needles; the boles

of the trees shone red, and in among the far-off oaks was a mist of pale green.

In the afternoon he walked through the oak wood over dry leaves of last year, and cushions of bright emerald moss, set with scarlet, purple, and orange fungi.

At sunset he stood by a little clearing; it was near a ranger's cottage. He could smell wood-smoke and see its swaying blue column rise above the thatched roof covered with stonecrop and little ferns. Here were rows of hives where lived the bees whose soft organ-like drone he had heard mingling with the 'cellos of the pines.

The sky was less brilliant than it had been the night before; it was bluish-white and the long slender clouds on the horizon were violet and pink. The sky grew paler and more pale; the silver of the evening star glimmered out, a tiny point of light. The pines were very dark; they looked black against the sky; a bat flickered over them.

He walked over the moor to the shore; he saw the ghost-white of the foam, and heard the rush and draw of the tide on the smooth pebbles. The moon was up when he walked back.

This night he did not try to sleep; not because he was worried and thoughtful; he had not

thought all day, and he did not think all night. It was very still and cloudless, and the moon was full; when it set the sky was solemnest blue; the stars and the white fire made the mystery of space more wonderful. It was one of those nights which are living symbols of largest patience; of breadth that includes all things, of silence whose root is the wisdom that knows; of that mighty indifference that is indifferent because of its tenderness rather than its coldness. A night sky that was a symbol of a Holy Catholic Church of the entire universe; not tolerant—because, after all, tolerance is a little, narrow, patronising invention of man's aggressive superiority. That which is all-inclusive is not tolerant; it is omnipotent, omniscient, Alpha and Omega; the first but also the last.

He did not think of these things; he never mused on such matters; he did not think at all that night nor notice anything particularly. He sat under the sky, his hands clasping his knees; he was not sleepy, because to be out of doors two days and nights after a life spent chiefly within walls is apt quite naturally to cause wakefulness.

He saw three shooting stars slide through the blue heart of the night. At dawn he saw a fox,

a vixen, and four little furry creatures with sharp, bright eyes; they played together and rolled in the heather without fear of man. He began wandering through the wood looking for birds' nests; he found four before the sun rose.

When it rose he began to walk back, for the forty-eight hours' holiday from the world-compelling pamphlet was ended.

He reached the house at seven o'clock; had a bath, dressed himself, ate a moderate breakfast, and began to open and arrange his employer's letters. That was at 8.30.

At nine o'clock his employer's guest on his way to breakfast looked into the library. He nodded, came in, and shut the door.

"Good morning, Dexter," he said. "You've got back, I see. I suppose I know your answer?"

"No, I believe you don't; for I think I'll go on here."

"You don't mean that?"

"I do."

"Afraid?"

"No."

"Moral scruples?"

"No."

"What then?"

The other hesitated, because he really did not know the answer. At last he said:

" I have my Sundays free. And I think I should miss the forest if I went away. I haven't any other reason—that I know of."

L'ENVOI

Power of the wave and the light,
Power of the wind and the dawn,
Fanned by the strength of thy breath
Man's soul is born.

Power of the song of the lark,
Power of the gold of the corn,
By perfume and silence and speech
Man's soul is born.

Power of the whispering rain,
Power of the day when it dies,
By magic of sunset and dusk
Man's soul doth rise!

Power of the stars and the night,
When singing and sighing shall cease
By the unknown span of thy rest
Man's soul knows peace!

THE BREATH UPON THE SLAIN

Shall these bones live? God knows.
The prophet saw such clothed with flesh and skin.
A wind blew on them, and Life entered in;
They shook and rose.
Shorten the time, O Lord! Blot out their sin!
Let Life begin!

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

THE wind was blowing through the heather, singing softly from the distant sea. The tiny tinkling sound of the purple bells was like faint music of faery.

They lay on an ancient barrow—three men on a summer holiday by the southern sea.

One was a thin, nervous-looking man, who knew much of the purlieus of the "primrose path," wherein he strayed to gather up its wreckage and mend it if he might, by the power of a God in whom he said he did not believe.

The second was an ascetic, devout, and hard-working priest of the Anglican Church.

The third was a man still young, but looking even younger than his years. Dennis Barra was his name; a man with a smooth, boyish face, strange yellow-grey eyes, and thick hair streaked

a little with grey; it gave the effect of dark hair lightly powdered, and added to the lack of modernity about the face. It was not a modern face; it had delicate irregular features, and a wide, thin-lipped mouth; the face looked curiously luminous in the strong sunlight.

The first man—Ralph Ingram—was speaking.

"No, Cardew," he said to the priest, "I tell you if I did not hold to that belief I should go mad. If it be not thus, the world is based on injustice. If we climb a ladder rung by rung, if we work out the result of our deeds—that's just. But no other theory is. What! a man murders and wipes out all his past by 'grace at the last,' 'forgiveness of sins' and 'faith' which his victim never had.

"You speak of these things as though they were outer contracts or a mental attitude," said the priest, "whereas they are real spiritual forces, definite powers of the unseen. I do not see that you can parcel out guilt thus, according to your system. If life be as you say it is, the fine threads of cause and effect, of will, speech, thought, impulse, action, are endless. It appears to me that by pushing 'causes' so far back, you have complicated everything so hopelessly that you

need some universal solvent to melt the bonds. If you accept Adam as collective man rather than as an individual ancestor, then Man—collective, heavenly man—has chosen his own lot; he has chosen his fall. His true life is elsewhere; in some mysterious Eden of the spirit he views all our inequalities with a wider view. Our misfortunes may be his opportunity; and our happiness his slough of despond. The view of man spiritual and man carnal may be diametrically opposed. His justice may be your injustice."

"Well! I should as soon believe in the sea-serpent as in the doctrine of regeneration, grace, and faith."

At this point Dennis Barra laughed.

"Are you laughing at Ingram or at me?" said the priest.

"I was laughing because I believe I once saw a sea-serpent off the coast of Scotland, and I would say so if I were not afraid of Ingram. And I was also laughing because I thought you didn't see that your views fit and where they fit. Ingram believes in the law which governed the past and governs the majority in the present; you believe in a possibility of the present—the certain law of the future."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well! because it struck me it was true! And regeneration is a possibility, regeneration of body and soul; and grace is a fact, and the swift transmutation of the sinner into the saint I believe to be possible."

"Are these things facts? I don't believe they are."

"Will you believe me if I tell you a story?"

"If you vouch for it."

"I do vouch for it. I know it's true. There was a man once who had just come out of prison. He deserved his punishment. His friends cut him—quite justly; and he did not greatly care, save that he was angry. He had some means; he was not in want; he was independent both of work and friends. He drank a little when he came out of prison, not much. He would drink for a day or two, and then keep sober for a week. In the place where he was, a mission was being held; and with no great result."

"They needed you there, Barra!"

The young man smiled.

"The people were indifferent. Something was lacking. The mission was to last a week. The clergy paraded the streets each night with a cross and the choir and banners. On the third night the man of whom I speak joined the proces-

sion and entered the church. It was a gloomy church; the singing was bad; the preacher had little power. There was nothing to stir the emotions. It was dull; the man was just sitting there, bored. He was thinking he would go out, when something—Something, I say—Some one —stood beside him. He saw no one, but some one was there; and that some one laid a hand upon his head. What that touch did to him he did not know; he never knew. It revolutionised him mentally, morally, yes, and bodily. There came to that man a bodily change, as though he was fused and re-made in a crucible of the spirit, —a cup of the Holy Graal. The only words which were clear to him were: 'The Fire of the Sacred Heart, the Fire of the Heart of the Ascended.' They were not spoken, but he knew they were there. And he knew too, that he, the drunkard, the criminal, the man fresh from gaol, must speak to the people. It was not a case of what spiritualists call 'control.' No; but God had laid a measure of His power in the trembling hands of that sinner, and said to him: 'Own thy sins in humbleness, and then—not thyself but Myself; give Me to my children!'

"He stood up and walked to the pulpit steps;

the preacher was just coming down and he laid his hand on his arm and said: 'Let me speak to them.'

"It seems little less than a miracle; for it was a church of the Established Church in England and he an unknown layman. But the preacher let him stand on the altar steps and speak. He told them very quietly and briefly who he was, and what was his character, and that he was sorry; and then he spoke.

"He had not spoken for three minutes before the women were sobbing, and the men were white as ashes, and many of them shaking like reeds in a wind. There was a great 'revival,' and people laid themselves, body, soul, and spirit, at the Feet of God."

"It must have been such a power as I have known you wield over people, Barra."

"It was the Fire of the Lord that had struck one man, and he passed it on. Of course some went back; but others didn't, and their lives were changed. But what I want to make you see is that what happened to that man could happen to all men; and his sins and his past were made naught when God's Hand touched him. It didn't matter so much that he didn't know how it was done. It was done. That is a living Power that

could work in the world at any minute if the time was ripe; and if and when it does we shall have a new heaven and a new earth."

"It seems to me hard that this fellow's sins and past were blotted out, and not those of the other poor wretches. Why should he escape suffering he had earned by the touch of a hand on his head? You say he deserved what he got. I daresay he deserved much more. Most likely he was a scoundrel who deserved the cat."

"Very likely he did. He never thought anything else. He always admitted his sins. But don't mistake. I never said he escaped suffering. The sins of the other poor wretches were blotted out *in him* for the time being only, of course. They swept into him like a tide of foulness and anguish, and the Fire burned them. They were its fuel; so that it swept out in a fuller flood and touched the people with its power and cleansed them. Escaped suffering! People who feel the burden of their own sins and sorrows to be too much to bear, little realise what it means to feel other people's as well. Do you know there are simple, unlearned, unknown women, secluded from the world, who *pray* the temptations of the strong (the 'vibrations' or 'magnetisms,' to

use the popular shibboleth) into their own bodily frames, and then endure their anguish to ease others' burdens? They *endure* them, I say; they offer them to be transmuted in their own bodies and souls by the spiritual force they call the Blood of Christ; and that Force flows out from them to the people for whom they pray. That is true, possible, a fact. Many a time, maybe, have those very people laughed at their inactive lives, simple faith, superstitious creeds, and all the rest of it. They'd be wallowing deep in mud, many of those strong ones, if it were not for that very superstitious creed that prompts the women's prayers. That is the real meaning of the Cross to these women; that is the vital, poignant meaning to them of being crucified with Christ."

The wind muttered in the heather, and the corncrake called from a distant field. The speaker's voice deepened a little; but it was quite steady, there was in it neither emotion nor excitement.

The priest raised himself a little on his elbow and looked at him thoughtfully. He did not speak.

"Barra," said Ralph Ingram, "do you *know* this story of your inspired criminal to be true?"

"I know it to be true," said Dennis Barra, quietly, "I know it, because I was the man!"

THE GLAMOUR-LAND

He follows on for ever, when all your chase is done,
He follows after shadows, the King of Ireland's son.
—— (?)

In the late autumn snow had fallen; it lay unmelted on the highest of the hills; it often lay there when on lower ground not even a light frost crisped the earth. But now it was very cold, and the trees were glittering with hoar-frost and delicate spikes of ice. The sea ran far inland and made a salt-water lake, almost land-locked. Blue was the key-colour of the place. The sky glowed blue and cloudless; the smooth water was gentian blue; seawards there was a huge bar of sand and shingle, heaped high, and running almost the whole way across the arm of the inrushing sea; therefore whether the tide was high or low the waves broke and leaped and swirled on it, so that the sea looked like a great lake, land-locked on three sides, and bounded on the fourth by a tossing, spouting, milk-white cataract of foam, as the great breakers raged and tumbled over the bar of sand. There were no vague tones nor shadowy outlines; the blue and white were vivid,

brilliant. Blue sea — blue sky — blue shadows on the white hills; white snow, white frost on leafless boughs, white foam aglitter in the sun. Blue — blue — blue — and unspeakably blue the shining wells of the sky, into which one might send one's thought forth in quest of Truth, and return anon bewildered and without booty, for the whole Truth was never yet gleaned from without nor yet from another man. White were the sea-gulls feeding on the foreshore; only a little seaweed-plastered jetty was rich brown and amber yellow; crouched at the foot of the jetty sheltered from the keen wind were some children who added a touch or two of red to the picture, for one of the girls wore a crimson coat and one of the boys a scarlet woollen cap.

These children were telling stories, and it was the red-capped boy's turn. He was not a very popular teller of tales; yet he gripped his hearers because he wove the stories of the things which he knew in his heart, and not of the things he had heard.

Now the other boys told of pirates and brigands, whether they had practical experience of them or not; for which reason one only of their number knew what he was talking about; he afterwards

became a great writer, for he drew upon the bank of knowledge, though how he came by the knowledge he could not tell. His swashbucklers and sea-wolves breathed the breath of life; and people who spent their time in wearily wrestling with office work and household accounts found them very refreshing company.

Redcap stood in the middle of the circle; the frosty wind fluttered his flaxen curls beneath his scarlet headgear. He was telling tales of Glamour-Land, the customs of which country he knew well; the group listened. The boys were not wholly absorbed; the girls who are generally quick to hear the Songs of the Glamour were the more interested. When the speaker ended his tale the girl in the crimson coat drew a long breath and gave her verdict "Lovely." The tale-teller did not heed her; he was one of those people who care nothing for the breath of fame and praise. He who understood pirates so well nodded approvingly. Throughout his life this boy knew good work when he saw it, because his own was so good. One of the boys offered criticism.

"It's all beastly rot," he said with the simple directness of boyhood. "There isn't any such place."

Redcap crushed him with swift scorn.

"That's all you know about it," he said. "That place I tell you about is real, and this place isn't; this place"—he waved his arms patronisingly at the sky and sea—"is an evil enchantment of the Black Witch; one of these days the Wise Queen will snuff her and her enchantment out—puff! like that!"

He snapped his fingers; the listeners looked uneasy and momentarily doubted the stability of the earth.

The boy who had criticised repeated his former remark: "It's all rot." Inwardly he hoped the Wise Queen would not snuff out the enchantment before tea time; for he knew there were hot cakes, and he could not honestly view them as evil enchantments. But where did the red-capped boy get his ideas about the relative reality of the seen and unseen?

Eight years after, that boy's father died; his mother married again, and thereafter great trouble and poverty fell upon a family that had hitherto been happy and prosperous. This boy, then a lad of eighteen, given to great dreams and visions of the Glamour-Land, was torn away from all he loved and hoped for and dreamed of; he was

sent to work at dull drudgery for a weekly pittance in a house of business in London. There, sick for the sights and sounds of Glamour-Land, he nearly broke down both mentally and physically. He was poor, friendless, proud, and unsociable; but that was nothing. If he could have had one daily glimpse of the Glamour Country, one note of its songs, he could have borne the rest. He fenced himself about with a wall of practical cheeriness and hard-headed common-sense and lived inside it in a hell of his own. In a narrow black street the child of the blue land, of sea, and wide distances lived and suffered for five dreadful years; then he chanced to find a room over some offices which looked upon the river, and suffered a little less. He began to earn more money; he was promoted. He did his work very well; he was to be depended upon; he was steady, alert, and "on the spot," said his employers. He was thoroughly practical. Once some reference was made to his prospects by a man who was his superior in the business house where he was employed. This man told him he was bound to get on; it was "rare to see a young fellow so steady, and with his heart in his business." The young man (he was then twenty-three) laughed

a little laugh that was as chill and dreary as the wuther of the north wind in frozen rushes by a bleak ice-coated mountain tarn.

"When you don't care for anything you have to do, one thing comes as easy as another," he said. "Besides you can 'give your mind' to heaps of things. If you like a piece of work it is hard to pull away from it to something else; but if one is much like another to you, and all equally dull, then, if you've a decent amount of self-control you can do them all fairly effectively."

While his superior was trying to understand his extraordinary sentiments, he said "Good-night, sir," and went out. He walked back to his room.

This befell just before he found the room overlooking the river; it was a sultry, ill-smelling summer night; the straight line of the houses rose before him in their terrible hideousness. There was a little church in the street in which they sang anthems. A choir practice was going on. He could hear the voices plainly:

"By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Zion. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."

The man hid his face in his hands and sighed; his heart was sick with great longing and intolerable weariness.

"God!" he said. "Let me go mad with memory rather than forget."

Yet after all it seemed undesirable to go mad, therefore he rose and went to a little cheap club; the members were many of them "thoughtful people" with "views"; most of their views were theoretically partly true, and practically partly false and wholly impossible to carry out; it was not always possible to put one's finger on the flaw in them. The members of that club talked a great deal; a man was talking very earnestly when he who desired to remember entered there. He was a reformer, and willing to make any personal sacrifice to further his regenerative views. He said:

"A wider charity is what men need. That is the root of the matter."

"Nothing has been so fruitful a cause of pauperisation," said a red-haired man who was listening for the sole purpose of disagreeing with him. This man was the type of person who can never extend his views beyond the meaning which he has decided to apply to a word.

" I do not mean Charity in that sense. I mean rather Love, which I have heard is Wisdom in activity, that which perceives a common basis of life. This is Wisdom, this is Love, this is Charity."

" Statistics prove," began the man, who while the other spoke had been thinking of his own views as to the meaning of charity.

" Statistics have no more to do with Charity than they have with Truth. They are the worst form of lying extant. Charity, in my sense, is the deepest of all wisdom. Faith, Hope, Charity, these three—and the greatest of these is Charity."

Then another voice uplifted itself.

" I think St. Paul was wrong there," it said. " The greatest of these is Faith."

It was the young man from the north.

" Faith! What do you mean by faith? "

" The sense of the unseen, and the trust in it," said he who used to tell the stories of the Glamour-Land. " The man who never loses the sense of that which he does not see, can move the world. All the force side of nature is allied with him. It is the unseen that is the motive power everywhere. The man who in an east-end slum, a city office, a factory, a gambling hell, a music hall, or in the

trivial round of society can realise that, has allied himself with the sun and the sea, with the wind and the light, with the Power that lies behind all and causes the whole to be."

Having thus spoken he wandered out as he had wandered in.

"That's a queer young fellow," said the red-haired man, "I think he's cracked."

"No," said one of the listeners, "I think not. He's a practical chap; quiet, solid, steady-going fellow, and no fool. A good man of business too. I've never seen him taken like that before."

He spoke as though he was the victim of some malady. If this was the case it did not assert itself again. The man worked on steadily and rose in the estimation of his employers, who were very sober, business-like people. When he had been nearly twenty years in London he met the boy who told the pirate stories by the blue sea. The boy was now a man and he told his stories to a wider public; he was married to the girl who wore the crimson coat. He recognised his former brother of the craft, and was very kind and glad to see him; he asked him to his house and insisted on his coming there. He saw, what no one in his guest's world saw, that such prosperity as was

his was not the full measure of that which the promise of his youth once seemed to deserve. He asked him why he had toiled in a London office; why he had ceased to tell the tales of Glamour-Land, of the Wise Queen, and the Black Witch. The other was silent awhile. At last he said: "I couldn't. That part of me is dead, and buried by the sea up yonder."

His host said no more at the time; he referred to it once again, very carefully and tactfully.

"No," said his guest. "I told you I couldn't. First, because my mind is like a hollow pipe, for other people's thoughts to blow through. Secondly, because I don't properly know any of the things I used to know when I was young."

He talked a while longer; then he rose, said good-bye, and never returned to that house again. He went back to the room which overlooked the river; for fifteen years he had lived therein. He sat by the window and muttered to himself:

"They that wasted us required of us mirth; saying: Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

It was the hour between light and darkness; the river was clear silvery greyish blue, and the light struck down into it like daggers of quivering pallid fire; the bridge showed threadlike arches

of vague darkness through the blue mist; little busy tugs sped up the water-way, dragging long, thin, black barges; a big waggon piled high with gleaming yellow straw creaked along the bank, coming townwards from the country. There was the half-light that brings out a thousand shifting tints; lights began to dot the shore and the boats lying at anchor.

On a sudden the scent of wild thyme smote through the room; there was a hill near his old home that was carpeted with it in summer time; and behold the Glamour-Land he had not seen for twenty years lay below him, in the very heart of the city. It was perhaps the shadowy silver-blue that opened the way; faint vague blue, unlike the gentian glow of the sea-lake, yet reminiscent of it. The room was palpably full of the perfume of wild thyme. The man rose. For ten years he had hungered for the beauty of his old home, and there had been no money to take him there, nor welcome for him had he journeyed thither. For ten years the money had been there and a temperate welcome to boot, but the desire lay, half-dead, numbed with over-long thwarting, weariness, and pain. Now he suddenly realised he could go back if he would. The next day he

asked for and obtained a holiday and started northwards.

It was evening when he arrived; he went to a little inn, and after dinner he walked to the jetty and stood upon it looking at the water leaping on the bar, and the glowing line of the sun-bathed hills. He looked and he looked and he looked, and behold! there was nothing there which he desired. The hunger of twenty years was for something which this beauty recalled to him—nothing more. The Glamour-Land was not here. The purple of the darkening sea, the tossing of the water, foaming ghost-white on the great bar, the clear golden light of the hills, woke in him only a great hunger for that of which they made him think; for which they caused him to long; and of what he thought, for what he longed he did not know. It eluded him; it fled before him like a flickering elf-flame, never to be grasped or known.

" How can we sing the Lord's Song in a strange land? "

He said the words aloud; as a stranger in that country in which he had been born and reared. The next day he went back to London to the room that overlooked the river. He sat alone; he was alone in the house; the offices below were closed;

the place was quiet; the roar of London sounded distant, it was like the far-off breaking of the waves on the bar; the river water was lapping against the walls that pent it in. As he walked homewards he had crossed the bridge, and stopped to buy watercress of an old man. This old man was one who, through the ignorance which is the heritage of every man, had, in an hour of that madness which we call sin, become outcast from the rank wherein he was born; now, ill, old, and very poor, he sold watercress, groundsel, and pencils on the bridge by day and slept in a common lodging-house by night. This man was the one soul on earth to whom he who once told the tales of Glamour-Land ever spoke of the longing that consumed him. This old man also had a hopeless longing of his own; he desired one hour back of the seventy years that lay behind him; one hour to fashion as he chose, one hour which had darkened and made a hell of forty years. The man from the north stopped and bought cress of him. As he took the cress he spoke. "I used to think I longed for my old home," he said. "I went back there yesterday after twenty years."

"What did you find?"

"The country I seek is not there," answered the other; his voice sounded tired, as though with much journeying of soul and body.

"Ah! you'd better not have gone. It is better to believe there is something which would make you content if you had it."

"I'd rather know the truth."

"You are young still," said the pencil-seller. "If I believed I were young and strong, loved and honoured, I should believe a lie. But I should prefer to believe it."

"It is probably just as true as your present beliefs about yourself, whatever they may be. Don't you think so?"

He walked on. Now the cress lay on the table and withered; he sat by the window and listened to the lapping of the tide. For twenty years he believed he knew what he desired, if he had been free to seek it; now he knew otherwise. He did not know where Glamour-Land was, and yet—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," he murmured, "may my right hand forget her cunning."

Into the silence of his soul there broke many voices speaking as one voice and they spoke after this manner:

"When we who guard the Songs of the Glamour

will that they shall be sung, they are sung. They ring through the world, though none know whence they sound, nor the manner of their sounding. Some say they come from here, and some from there. And it is nothing to us whether our singers be kings or slaves, saints or sinners, fools or sages, men or women, for it is we who sing through their lips, and it is the world that hears when the time is ripe. We have before this day caused those who were blind, and dumb, and deaf to sing the songs of the Glamour, and some of these never knew they sang. Moreover, you have sung them here in the city's heart for twenty years and more, while you thought your lips were mute and your heart hungry with desire of Glamour-Land. And because you had nothing for which you longed, you learned to look for nothing your hands could grasp, but to hold all things readily and loose them easily at the appointed hour. Wherefore we, who know how it is with a man's soul, drew from you the common desires of men as pith is drawn by a shepherd boy from a reed when he would pipe therewith; thereafter we fashioned these your body and soul into a pipe whereon we might pipe the Songs of the Glamour, and the world has heard them. You felt their notes

ring through your soul, while your ears were deaf, strain them as you would."

"And I?" he asked, "am I nothing?"

"Nothing," they made answer, "nothing—or all that is."

Whereat he fell to musing on their words, until the lapping water, the roaring city, and the beating of the heart within his body, seemed alike to be but the pulsing of a life that swept outward from the Unknown God of the Worlds.

THE TEMPLE PRESS LETCHWORTH ENGLAND

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